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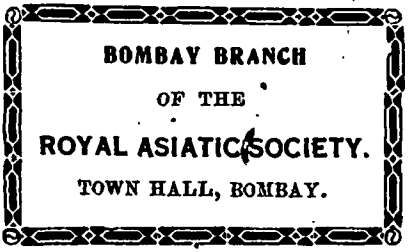

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MILTON'S LIFE

IN HIS OWN WORDS.

LONDON : PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

JOHN MILTON:

OR

MILTON'S LIFE *in his* OWN WORDS.

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Oct

ÆT. XXI.

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AUTHOR OF 'SELECTIONS FROM THE PROSE WORKS OF JOHN MILTON.'

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TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE AND VENERABLE

FREDERICK TWISLETON WYKEHAM FIENNES,

THIRTEENTH LORD SAYE AND SELE,

ARCHDEACON OF HEREFORD, D.C.L.,

THE EARNEST HELPER OF CHURCH RESTORATION IN THE ARCHDEACONRY,

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Hail, heav'nly Poet! taught in sorrow's school
To sing of Paradise both lost and won;
No earthly Paradise thyself e'er found,
Save that within thy own pure breast serene;
Who does not love thy classic page to scan,
Thy stately prose and justly-cadenc'd song?
Long have I lov'd thee—long have ponder'd o
Thy charmèd words, and sought to read thy soul,
To picture on my brain thy image fair.
Not thy sweet manly form and lofty brow
So often limn'd; but thy deep hidden life,
Thy very self, itself, I fain would know.
But all are silent—history's busy page
Scarce deigns to mention thy immortal name,
Immortal now, though then by all unprais'd.
And still thou findest 'few, though fit audience.'
Among those 'few' may I be counted 'fit'!
To thy own page I turn; and converse sweet
There hold with thee, there read thy chequer'd life,
All that thou wert; for books are living things,

'The precious life-blood of a master-spirit,'[1]
Treasur'd and stor'd for life beyond this life.
And thy own works alone thy true self show,
Thy secret thoughts, intents, and ardent hopes
To right a nation's wrongs, and teach the world
A better lore than that thyself wert taught.
There best thy image rises to thy view
In all its lineaments majestical;
With faults indeed, for else thou wert not man,
But these outweigh'd by virtues manifold,
Heroic, high, which make thy life, thy books,
Things which we contemplate with wond'ring love.
Let others, reading here thy self-told tale,
Love thy bright genius—I will love the MAN.

J. J. G. G.

[1] Milton's *Areopagitica.*

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Chronological Table of Milton's Life.

A.D.	ANNO ÆTATIS	
1608		Birth in London, Dec. 9. Baptism at All-hallows, Dec. 20.
1618–1623.	10–15.	Pupil of Thomas Young.
1623–1625.	15–17.	St. Paul's School, under Alexander Gill.
1625–1632.	17–24.	Seven years at Christ's College, Cambridge. M.A. 1632. Oxford, 1635.
1632–1638.	24–30.	Five years at Horton, Buckinghamshire, his father's residence.
1638–1639.	30–31.	Tour in Italy.
1640.	32.	Resides in St. Bride's Churchyard. Educates his nephews.
1643.	35.	Marries Mary Powell.
1646.	38.	Birth of his daughter Anne.
1648.	41.	Birth of Mary. Becomes Cromwell's Latin Secretary.
1651.	44.	Loses the sight of one eye.
1652.	45.	Birth of Deborah, and death of first wife.
1654.	46.	Becomes totally blind.
1655.	48	Retires from secretaryship.

A.D.	ANNO ÆTATIS	
1656.	49.	Marries his second wife, Catharine Woodcock, who died within the year.
1664.	56.	Resides in Jewin Street. Marries his third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, thirty years younger than himself, who survived him about fifty years.
1665.	57.	Resides at Chalfont, Buckinghamshire, where he completes his 'Paradise Lost.'
1674.	66.	Death, November 8, at Bunhill-Fields.

Chronological Table of Milton's Works.

A.D.	ANNO ÆTATIS	
1624.	15.	Paraphrase of Psalms CXIV. and CXXXVI.
1625.	16.	Letter I. To his Tutor, Thomas Young.
1626.	17.	Sylv. I. Ode on the Death of the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge. Sylv. II. On the Fifth of November. Sylv. III. On the Death of the Bishop of Ely. On the Death of a fair Infant, dying of a Cough. Elegy I. To Charles Diodati. Elegy II. On the Death of the University Beadle. Elegy III. On the Death of the Bishop of Winchester.
1627.	18.	Elegy IV. To his Tutor, Thomas Young.
1628.	19.	Letters II. III. and IV. Elegy VII. Anno ætatis 19. Sylv. IV. Nature Unimpaired by Time Vacation Exercise. Anno ætatis 19. Prolusio VI.
1629.	20.	Elegy V. On the Approach of Spring. Elegy VI. To Charles Diodati. Sylv. V. On the Platonic Idea. Sylv. VI. To his Father.

A.D.	ANNO ÆTATIS	
1629.	21.	Ode on the Nativity.
1630.	21.	The Circumcision. The Passion. Epitaph on Shakspeare. Two Epitaphs on Hobson.
1631.	22.	Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester. On Time. At a solemn Music. On May Morning. Sonnet I. (Warton's edition.)
1631.	23.	Sonnet VII. On his Twenty-third Year. Arcades.
1634.	26.	Comus. Psalm CXIV. In Greek.
		Letter V. L'Allegro and Il Penseroso.
1637.	29.	Lycidas. Letters VI. and VII.
1638.	30.	Letter VIII.
1639.	31.	Letter IX. To Salsillus, Scazons. In Latin. To Mansus. In Latin. Epitaphium Damonis.
1641.	33.	Treatise of Reformation. First prose work. Of Prelatical Episcopacy. Reason of Church Government. Animadversions.
1642.	34.	Apology for Smectymnuus. Sonnet VIII.
1643.	35.	Sonnets IX. and X.

A.D.	ANNO ÆTATIS	
1644.	37.	On Divorce. On Education. Areopagitica.
1645.	38.	Bucer on Divorce. Tetrachordon. Colasterion. Sonnets XI. and XII. On the New Forcers of Conscience.
1646.	39.	To John Rouse. In Latin. Sonnets XIII. and XIV.
1647.	40.	Letter X.
1648.	41.	Translation of Nine Psalms, commencing with the Eightieth. Sonnet XV.
1649.	42.	The Tenure of Kings. First Four Books of History of Britain.
1650.	43.	Iconoclastes.
1651.	44.	First Defence. In Latin.
1652.	45.	Letters XI. XII. and XIII. Johannis Philippi Angli Responsio. Sonnets XVI. and XVII.
1653.	46.	Translation of Psalms from I. to VIII.
1654.	47.	Second Defence. In Latin. Letters XIV. XV. XVI. and XVII.
1655.	48.	His own Defence. In Latin. A Manifesto of the Lord Protector. Sonnets XVIII. XIX. XX. XXI. and XXII.
1656.	49.	Letters XVIII. XIX. and XX. Sonnet XXIII. Letters XXIII. XXIV. XXV. XXVI. and XXVII.

A.D.	ANNO ÆTATIS	
1658.	51.	Letter XXI. Paradise Lost commenced. Finished, 1665, in seven years, when he was 58.
1659.	52.	Letters XXVIII. XXIX. and XXX. Short Prose Pamphlets.
1661.	54.	Accidence commenced Grammar.
1666.	59.	Letter XXXI.
1667.	60.	Paradise Lost published.
1670.	63.	Remainder of History of Britain.
1671.	64.	Paradise Regained. Samson Agonistes.
1672.	65.	Artis Logicæ Plenior Institutio.
1673.	66.	Of True Religion. Treatise on Christian Doctrine. Discovered in 1823.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

FIFTY years ago, a long-lost work in Latin of John Milton's was accidentally discovered in the State Paper Office; from the title I have chosen, it might be supposed that a second discovery had been made, and another work of the immortal poet, of which the world had never before heard, been brought to light; but there is nothing in the whole of Milton's voluminous works to indicate that he ever contemplated writing his own life.[1] And yet

[1] The only intimation of anything of the kind is given by Aubrey, Milton's earliest biographer and contemporary, 1626–1697. His words are, 'Qu. Mr. Allam of Edm. Hall, Oxon, of Mr. J. Milton's Life, *writt by himselfe*.' What this means, or to what it refers, it is impossible to say, for no one else notices it, nor has any such composition left by the poet in manuscript been as yet discovered. John Aubrey was personally acquainted with Milton, but Symmons, no great authority himself and a very feeble biographer, says that his

it is quite true that his whole history year by year may be gleaned from his prose writings. So self-conscious is he throughout—so full of himself, his own plans, aspirations, sufferings, wrongs, and privations—that he frequently digresses to enlarge upon these, and enters into minute details of his private and personal history which are most interesting and highly suggestive.

There is no need to defend his character, to discuss the controverted points in his life and religious opinions—this he has himself done over and over again in a far more satisfactory manner than any-one else could ever accomplish it: all is known, settled, and accounted for by a reference to his own manly, decided, and candid words. He exercises, it is true, a certain self-restraint, and is somewhat reticent of himself and his own feelings and history, in his larger and later poetical works, the

authority is not much to be relied on. His Life of Milton was never published, but the MS. is preserved in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and has been printed in Godwin's *Lives of Edward and John Philips*, 1815.

'Paradise Lost,' and 'Regained.' It is only at the pauses of the story—at the commencement of a new book, or when arrived midway through his task—that he refers to himself as one under inspiration, neglected it may be by man, but peculiarly favoured and visited by God; but in his minor poems, his noble and plaintive sonnets, his 'Samson Agonistes,' and especially in his prose writings, such as the 'Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,' he again and again alludes to himself, often eloquently and always feelingly, and thus undesignedly furnishes the autobiography which I now venture to lay before my readers.

Numerous Lives of Milton already exist, by Wood, Aubrey, Toland, Richardson, Fenton, Birch, Peck, Johnson, Hayley, Todd, Symmons, Ivimey, Brydges, Mitford, Edmonds, Keightley, Masson, and we may add the memoirs prefixed to the various editions of his works; all of which are in many respects unsatisfactory, and I feel constrained to repeat the dictum of Southey, and later

of J. J. Blunt, in the 'Quarterly,' that a new Life is still a desideratum in literature. Such it is always likely to remain from the very nature of the case. Perhaps there has been only one man who could have done it, and he has passed away, the hundredth anniversary of whose birth we have just been celebrating. The failure of Milton's biographers from Toland, through Johnson, down to the present time warns us not to attempt an impossibility. The undertaking before me seems not to lie open to the same objections, or the same difficulties, and, therefore, it is conceived, may possibly supply the want which we all feel. Johnson has had his Boswell, Scott his Lockhart, Cowper his Southey, who have left nothing for their successors to perform, but the great Milton has not been so fortunate; his lofty and noble and unique character is yet misunderstood and maligned, his works for the most part are unappreciated and unread; his portrait, with its lines of beauty and its seams and scars of care and thought, is still to be drawn by

some master-hand more cunning and skilful than any who have hitherto held the pencil; the story of his life, though told so often, still remains to be written. The following work is but a small contribution towards this much-desired consummation. It does not pretend to be another Life of Milton; nor can it in any way clash or compete with those who have in past time, or who may in the future work in this still but partially explored mine; because I make use of Milton's own words alone—those *ipsissima verba* which have long been to me sacred and charmed words.

All his biographers have drawn their information chiefly from his own writings, which are abundantly rich in biographical material; but to cull and construct an autobiography entirely from his own poetry and prose has not yet, I believe, been attempted, though it seems quite feasible, and cannot fail to be highly interesting, and I would fain think satisfactory, because authentic and reliable. It is of course unintentional on Milton's part, and

some of the quotations from his poetry may be considered forced and fanciful, but this cannot be said of those autobiographical passages interspersed throughout his prose works. The salient points of his personal history, the prominent features of his character, will by this means stand out in much higher relief than by any laboured defence or exposition made by another, who would be sure to be warped by his own feelings and prepossessions, political or otherwise. I shall neither praise him nor blame him, 'blamed enough elsewhere,' but let him altogether speak for himself, defend his own character and conduct, give his own version of those various points of his history and opinions which we are wont to controvert.

Had I the task of writing his Life, praise and blame should be dealt out, not indeed with an equal hand, but with the reverential partiality of one who loves his memory. Pity and regret would often have to be expressed—nay, I could even weep to think that one so gifted, so accredited by

Heaven, so visibly stamped with God's own image, should so far forget his high origin and high destiny, as to bid his heavenly muse stand aside and veil her eyes, while he devotes his mighty intellect to polemical and controversial subjects, and uses his gigantic powers to annihilate some miserable opponent, wasting his best days and best strength in unworthy and fruitless tasks, which neither retarded nor promoted the great cause that filled his heart, influencing scarcely at all the course of events then transpiring.

There is a remarkable passage in Scott's novel of 'Woodstock,' where the Roundhead and Puritan Markham Everard rouses the indignation of his Cavalier uncle, Sir Henry Lee, by making him unwittingly praise 'the sophist Milton,' which, taken as a whole, exactly expresses my own views, while it shows that that great writer had seized the true view of Milton's character and works. I cannot do better than quote it *in extenso*, and its intrinsic beauty and pathos and eloquence will more than

atone for its length. In reply to Sir Henry's question whether the convulsion which had sent them saints and prophets without end had not also afforded them a poet with enough both of gifts and graces to outshine poor old Will, the oracle and idol of the blinded and carnal Cavaliers, Colonel Everard says :—

'"Surely, sir, I know verses written by a friend of the Commonwealth, and those, too, of a dramatic character, which, weighed in an impartial scale, might equal even the poetry of Shakspeare, and which are free from the fustian and indelicacy with which that great bard was sometimes content to feed the coarse appetites of his barbarous audience."

'"Indeed!" said the knight, keeping down his wrath with difficulty. "I should like to be acquainted with this master-piece of poetry! May we ask the name of this distinguished person?"

'"It must be Vicars, or Withers, at least," said the feigned page.

'"No, sir," replied Everard, "nor Drummond of Hawthornden, nor Lord Stirling neither.[1] And yet the verses will vindicate what I say, if you will make allowance for indifferent recitation, for I am better accustomed to speak to a battalion than to those who love the muses. The speaker is a lady benighted, who, having lost her way in a pathless forest, at first expresses herself agitated by the supernatural fears to which her situation gave rise."

'"A play too, and written by a Roundhead author!" said Sir Henry in surprise.

'"A dramatic production at least," replied his nephew; and began to recite simply, but with feeling, the lines now so well known, but which had then obtained no celebrity, the fame of the author resting upon the basis rather of his polemical and political publications, than on the poetry doomed in after-days to support the eternal structure of his immortality.

[1] William Drummond, born 1585; William Alexander, born 1580.

"These thoughts may startle, but will not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong-siding champion, Conscience."

"My own opinion, nephew Markham, my own opinion," said Sir Henry, with a burst of admiration; "better expressed, but just what I said when the scoundrelly Roundheads pretended to see ghosts at Woodstock. Go on, I prithee."

'Everard proceeded:—

"O welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings,
And thou unblemish'd form of Chastity!
I see thee visibly, and now believe
That He, the Supreme Good, to Whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassail'd.—
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?"[1]

'"The rest has escaped me," said the reciter, "and I marvel I have been able to remember so much."

[1] *Comus*, 210–222.

'Sir Henry Lee, who had expected some effusion very different from those classical and beautiful lines, soon changed the scornful expression of his countenance, relaxed his contorted upper lip, and, stroking down his beard with his left hand, rested the forefinger of the right upon his eyebrow, in sign of profound attention. After Everard had ceased speaking, the old man sighed as at the end of a strain of sweet music. He then spoke in a gentler manner than formerly.

'"Cousin Markham," he said, "these verses flow sweetly, and sound in my ears like the well-touched warbling of a lute. But thou knowest I am something slow of apprehending the full meaning of that which I hear for the first time. Repeat me these verses again slowly and deliberately; for I always love to hear poetry twice, the first time for sound, and the latter time for sense."

'Thus encouraged, Everard recited again the lines with more hardihood and better effect; the knight distinctly understanding, and, from his looks and motions, highly applauding them.

'"Yes!" he broke out, when Everard was again silent; "Yes, I *do* call that poetry, though it were even written by a Presbyterian, or an Anabaptist either. Ay, there were good and righteous people to be found even amongst the offending towns which were destroyed by fire. And certainly I have heard, though with little credence, (begging your pardon, cousin Everard,) that there are men among you who have seen the error of their ways in rebelling against the best and kindest of masters, and bringing it to that pass that he was murdered by a gang yet fiercer than themselves. Ay, doubtless the gentleness of spirit, and the purity of mind, which dictated those beautiful lines, has long ago taught a man so amiable to say, I have sinned, I have sinned. Yes, I doubt not so sweet a harp has been broken, even in remorse, for the crimes he was witness to; and now he sits drooping for the shame and sorrow of England,—all his noble rhymes, as Will says,[1]

[1] *Hamlet*, act iii. s. 1.

'Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh.'

Dost thou not think so, Master Kerneguy?"

'"Not I, Sir Henry," answered the page, somewhat maliciously.

'"What! dost not believe the author of these lines must needs be of the better file, and leaning to our persuasion?"

'"I think, Sir Henry, that the poetry qualifies the author to write a play on the subject of Dame Potiphar and her recusant lover; and as for his calling, that last metaphor of the cloud in a black coat or cloak, with silver lining, would have dubbed him a tailor with me, only that I happen to know that he is a schoolmaster by profession, and by political opinions qualified to be Poet Laureate to Cromwell; for what Colonel Everard has repeated with such unction, is the production of no less celebrated a person than John Milton."

'"John Milton!" exclaimed Sir Henry in astonishment—"What! John Milton, the blasphemous and bloody-minded author of the 'Defensio Populi

Anglicani!'—the advocate of the infernal High Court of Fiends!—the creature and parasite of that grand impostor, that loathsome hypocrite, that detestable monster, that prodigy of the universe, that disgrace of mankind, that landscape of iniquity, that sink of sin, that compendium of baseness, Oliver Cromwell!"

'"Even the same John Milton," answered Charles; "schoolmaster to little boys, and tailor to the clouds, which he furnishes with suits of black, lined with silver, at no other expense than that of common sense."

'"Markham Everard," said the old knight, "I will never forgive thee—never, never. Thou hast made me speak words of praise respecting one whose offal should fatten the region-kites. Speak not to me, sir, but begone! Am I, your kinsman and benefactor, a fit person to be juggled out of my commendation and eulogy, and brought to bedaub such a whitened sepulchre as the sophist Milton?"

'"I profess," said Everard, "this is hard measure, Sir Henry. You pressed me, you defied me, to produce poetry as good as Shakspeare's. I only thought of the verses, not of the politics of Milton."'

This passage, with its exquisite touches of nature, proves that Sir Walter had a just appreciation of the real merits both of Milton's poetry and prose—that this is to be attained by keeping distinct his politics and his genius—and that Scott would have been the very person to have written his Life. A combination of the principles and spirit which animated both uncle and nephew can alone lead us to a correct view of the many-sided and much misunderstood character of John Milton. And to hear him tell the story of his life in his own words, speaking for himself in the *apologia pro vitâ suâ*, in the *authoris pro se defensio* which characterises almost all his works, must be the most satisfactory basis on which to found our judgment as to what Milton really was and thought and felt. 'On evil days and evil tongues'

his lot was cast; and we may the less regret the obloquy which he met with on all hands, as it gave occasion to that noble egotism, that manly self-assertion, which had nothing to conceal, nothing to excuse, ever blameless in the court of conscience, in the sight of God, and in the estimation of posterity.

The plan I have adopted, as already indicated, is to transcribe, first from his prose and then from his poetry, those numerous passages in which Milton speaks of himself, his studies, intentions, and literary aspirations and achievements. We meet with not only many interesting details of his life and personal history, his habits, opinions, and principles of action, but likewise with various explanations and notices of the origin and design of his several works. The author's own words and sentiments with regard to these, expressed incidentally and parenthetically, may fairly be considered autobiographical. Whatever illustrates

his own character and conduct, or throws light on his secret and hidden history—clearing away the aspersions of enemies, or evincing the love wherewith friends regarded him—this is the matter which I have diligently sought for and pursued through many a long and tedious treatise. The result is, the full-length portrait, drawn by his own hand, of the man and the poet,—that is, of him who has given us 'Comus' and 'Paradise Lost;' for we are curious to know all about one who could pen such immortal and spirit-stirring words and scenes as there enchant and astonish us. Not as the opponent of Salmasius, the enemy of Charles, the tool of Parliament, the Utopian and Atlantic idealist, educator, and reformer, are we interested to know how he thought, and felt, and acted, but because this man is the same who entrances and charms us in his poetry, we treasure up and ponder upon his lightest word, and desire to follow him into his private and every-day life. And we rejoice that we are enabled to do this to so great

an extent from the authentic source of his own writings. From his own verse, and still more from his own prose, we may learn what manner of man Milton was, and see him rise up before us, restored, as it were, to life, the very same that his contemporaries saw and knew him, the clever boy, the hard student, the enthusiastic patriot, the patient and triumphant sufferer, beautiful in mind as in person, conscientious, stern, stately, stainless, and victorious, from first to last, under every trial, and in every duty and relation of life, whether private or public.

MUCH COWARNE VICARAGE,
October 1871.

Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee:

* * * * * *

Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

WORDSWORTH'S *Sonnet on Milton.*

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

JOHN MILTON.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH—HOME EDUCATION—SCHOOL LIFE.

A.D. 1608—1625. A. ÆT. 1—17.

'I WILL now mention who and whence I am. I was born at London,[1] of an honest family;[2] my father was distinguished by the undeviating integrity of his life; my mother, by the esteem in which she was held, and the alms which she be-

[1] Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton, were all born in London.

[2] 'Genere honesto,' i.e. of a good family, of generous descent. Milton, like Justice Shallow, could write himself *armigero*. 'The arms that John Milton did use and seal his letters with were, Argent, a spread eagle with two heads gules, legg'd and beak'd sable.'—*Wood*, vol. i. p. 262. There is a silver seal still existing with this shield impressed upon it, surmounted by the crest—a lion's claw, azure, above a helmet, grasping an eagle's head and neck, erased gules. It is in the possession of Edgar Disney, Esq., of the Hyde,

stowed. My father destined me from a child to the pursuits of literature; and my appetite for knowledge was so voracious, that, from twelve years of age I hardly ever left my studies, or went to bed before midnight. This primarily led to my loss of sight. My eyes were naturally weak, and I was subject to frequent headaches, which, however, could not chill the ardour of my curiosity, or retard the progress of my improvement. My father had me daily instructed in the grammar school, and by other masters at home.'[1]

'When at your expense, my excellent father, the eloquence of the tongue of Romulus opened its stores to me, and the delights of Latium, and those high-sounding words uttered by the eloquent Greeks, which were wont to become the mouth of

Ingatestone, Essex, who inherited it from his grandfather, Dr. Disney, who inherited it from Thomas Hollis, who bought it of Mr. John Payne for three guineas in 1761. It came into the possession of the latter on the death of Foster, who married Milton's granddaughter. In the British Museum may be seen the original agreement with Simmonds for the publication of *Paradise Lost*, impressed with this seal. Hence Milton's father adopted the Spread Eagle as the sign of his house in Bread Street, houses being at that time not numbered, but distinguished by certain signs or emblems, a practice which is now confined to Inns and Hotels.

[1] *The Second Defence*, Bohn's edition, vol. i. p. 25.

Jupiter, you persuaded me to add the flowers of which Gaul boasts, and that speech which the new Italian pours forth from his degenerate mouth, witnessing the barbaric innovations by his very language, and the mysteries which the sacred prophet of Palestine speaks.' [1]

'After I had for my first years, by the ceaseless diligence and care of my father (whom God recompense), been exercised to the tongues, and some sciences, as my age would suffer, by sundry masters and teachers, both at home and at the schools, it was found that whether aught was imposed me by them that had the overlooking, or betaken to of mine own choice in English, or other tongue, prosing or versing, but chiefly by this latter, the style by certain vital signs it had, was likely to live.' [2]

'I had my time as others have who have good learning bestowed upon them, to be sent to those places where, the opinion was, it might be soonest attained; and as the manner is, was not unstudied

This is from the lines to his father, *Sylvarum Liber*, vi. 76–85, translated by David Masson in his *Life of Milton*.

[2] *The Reason of Church Government*, p. 477.

in those authors which are most commended. Whereof, some were grave orators and historians, whose matter methought I loved indeed, but as my age then was, so I understood them; others were the smooth elegiac poets, whereof the schools are not scarce, whom both for the pleasing sound of their numerous (*harmonious*) writing, which in imitation I found most easy, and most agreeable to nature's part in me, and for their matter, which what it is, there be few who know not, I was so allured to read, that no recreation came to me better welcome. For that it was then those years with me which are excused, though they be least severe, I may be saved the labour to remember ye. Whence having observed them to account it the chief glory of their wit, in that they were ablest to judge, to praise, and by that could esteem themselves worthiest to love those high perfections which under one or other name they took to celebrate; I thought with myself by every instinct and presage of nature, which is not wont to be false, that what emboldened them to this task might with such diligence as they used embolden me; and that what judgment, wit, or elegance was my share,

would herein best appear, and best value itself, by how much more wisely, and with more love of virtue I should choose (let rude ears be absent) the object of not unlike praises.

'Nor blame it, readers, in those years to propose to themselves such a reward as the noblest dispositions above other things in this life have sometimes preferred. For by the firm settling of these persuasions I became, to my best memory, so much a proficient, that if I found those authors anywhere speaking unworthy things of themselves, or unchaste of those names which before they had extolled; this effect it wrought with me, from that time forward their art I still applauded, but the men I deplored; and above them all preferred the two famous renowners of Beatrice and Laura (*Dante and Petrarch*), who never write but honour of them to whom they devote their verse, displaying sublime and pure thoughts without transgression. And long it was not after, when I was confirmed in this opinion, that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem; that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honourablest

things; not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy. These reasonings, together with a certain niceness of nature, an honest haughtiness, and self-esteem either of what I was or what I might be (which let envy call pride), and lastly that modesty, whereof here I may be excused to make some beseeming profession; all these uniting the supply of their natural aid together, left me still above those low descents of mind, beneath which he must deject and plunge himself, that can agree to unlawful prostitutions.

'Next, (for hear me out now, readers,) that I may tell ye whither my young feet wandered, I betook me among lofty fables and romances, which recount in solemn cantos the deeds of knighthood founded by our victorious kings, and from hence had in renown over all Christendom. There I read it in the oath of every knight, that he should defend, to the expense of his best blood, or of his life, if it so befell him, the honour and chastity of virgin, or matron; from whence even then I learned what a noble virtue chastity sure must be, to the defence

of which so many worthies, by such a dear adventure of themselves, had sworn. And if I found in the story afterward, any of them, by word or deed, breaking that oath, I judged it the same fault of the poet, as that which is attributed to Homer, to have written indecent things of the gods. Only this my mind gave me, that every free and gentle spirit, without that oath, ought to be born a knight, nor needed to expect the gilt spur, or the laying on of a sword upon his shoulder, to stir him up, both by his counsel and his arms, to secure and protect the weakness of any attempted chastity. So that even these books, which to many others have been the fuel of wantonness and loose living, I cannot think how, unless by divine indulgence, proved to me so many incitements, as you have heard, to the love and stedfast observation of that virtue which abhors the society of bordelloes.

'Thus from the laureat fraternity of poets, riper years and the ceaseless round of study and reading led me to the shady spaces of philosophy; but chiefly to the divine volumes of Plato and his equal Xenophon, where, if I should tell ye what I learnt of chastity and love, I mean that which is

truly so, whose charming cup is only virtue, which she bears in her hand to those who are worthy (the rest are cheated with a thick intoxicating potion, which a certain sorceress, the abuser of love's name, carries about); and how the first and chiefest office of love begins and ends in the soul, producing those happy twins of her divine generation, knowledge and virtue. With such abstracted sublimities as these, it might be worth your listening, readers, as I may one day hope to have ye in a still time, when there shall be no chiding; not in these noises.

'Last of all, not in time, but as perfection is last, that care was ever had of me with my earliest capacity, not to be negligently trained in the precepts of the Christian religion: this that I have hitherto related hath been to show, that though Christianity had been but slightly taught me, yet a certain reservedness of natural disposition and moral discipline, learnt out of the noblest philosophy, was enough to keep me in disdain of far less incontinences than these. But having had the doctrine of Holy Scripture unfolding those chaste and high mysteries with timeliest care infused,

that 'the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body;' thus also I argued to myself, that if unchastity in a woman, whom St. Paul terms 'the glory of man,' be such a scandal and dishonour, then certainly in a man, who is both the image and glory of God, it must, though commonly not so thought, be much more deflouring and dishonourable; in that he sins both against his own body, which is the perfecter sex, and his own glory which is in the woman; and that which is worst, against the image and glory of God, which is in himself. Nor did I slumber over that place expressing such high rewards of ever accompanying the Lamb, with those celestial songs to others inapprehensible, but not to those who were not defiled with women, which doubtless means fornication; for marriage must not be called a defilement.'[1].

'The emotions of my gratitude, my excellent tutor, which your services so justly inspire, are too expansive and too warm to be expressed in the confined limits of poetical metre; they demand the unconstrained freedom of prose, or rather the

[1] *An Apology for Smectymnuus*, vol. iii. pp. 116–122.

exuberant richness of Asiatic phraseology ;[1] though it would far exceed my power to describe how much I am obliged to you, even if I could drain dry all the sources of eloquence, or exhaust all the topics of discourse which Aristotle or the famed Parisian logician has collected. For Heaven knows that I regard you as a parent, that I have always treated you with the utmost respect, and I imagine that you are always present, that I hear your voice and contemplate your looks. I long since received your desirable present of a Hebrew Bible. I wrote this at my lodgings in the city, not, as usual, surrounded by my books. If, therefore, there be anything in this letter which frustrates expectation, it shall be compensated by a more elaborate composition as soon as I return to the dwelling of the Muses.'[2]

'This good hap I had from a careful education, to be inured and seasoned betimes with the best and elegantest authors of the learned tongues, and thereto brought an ear that could measure a just

[1] Asiatic eloquence was that which prevailed in the Greek colonies of Asia Minor, more florid and brilliant than the oratory of Athens. See 'Quintus Hortensius,' Lempriere's *Dictionary*.

[2] Letter I. To his tutor, Thomas Young, 1625.

cadence, and scan without articulating, rather nice and humorous in what was tolerable, than patient to read every drawling versifier.' [1]

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PASSAGES FROM MILTON'S POETRY REFERABLE TO THIS PERIOD OF HIS LIFE.

'O what a multitude of thoughts at once
Awaken'd in me swarm, while I consider
What from within I feel myself. . . .
When I was yet a child, no childish play
To me was pleasing; all my mind was set
Serious to learn and know, and thence to do
What might be public good; myself I thought
Born to that end, born to promote all truth,
All righteous things: [2] therefore above my years
The law of God I read, and found it sweet,
Made it my whole delight.' [3]

'Hail native language, that by sinews weak
Did'st move my first endeavouring tongue to speak;
And mad'st imperfect words with childish trips,
Half unpronounc'd, slide through my infant lips;

[1] *Apology for Smectymnuus*, vol. iii. p. 140.

[2] The five preceding lines were placed by the engraver under Cornelius Jansen's portrait of Milton, æt. 10, *seriousness* being the characteristic of his childhood and indeed of his whole life.

[3] *Paradise Regained*, book i. 196–208.

Driving dumb silence from the portal door,
Where he had mutely sat two years before.

* * * * *

I have some naked thoughts that rove about,
And loudly knock to have their passage out;
And weary of their place do only stay
Till thou hast deck'd them in thy best array;
Yet I had rather, if I were to choose,
Thy service in some graver subject use;
Such as may make thee search thy coffers round,
Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound:
Such where the deep transported mind may soar
Above the wheeling poles; and at heav'n's door
Look in, and see each blissful deity
How he before the thunderous throne doth lie,
Listening to what unshorn Apollo sings
To th' touch of golden wires, while Hebe brings
Immortal nectar to her kingly sire:
Then passing through the spheres of watchful fire,
And misty regions of wide air next under,
And hills of snow and lofts of piled thunder,
May tell at length how green-ey'd Neptune raves,
In heav'n's defiance mustering all his waves;
Then sing of secret things that came to pass
When beldame Nature in her cradle was;
And last, of kings and queens and heroes old;
Such as the wise Demodocus once told

In solemn songs at king Alcinöus' feast,
While sad Ulysses' soul, and all the rest
Are held with his melodious harmony
In willing chains and sweet captivity.' [1]

'His growth now to youth's full flower, displaying
All virtue, grace, and wisdom to achieve
Things highest, greatest.' [2]

'Why was my breeding order'd and prescrib'd
As of a person separate to God,
Design'd for great exploits; if I must die
Betray'd, captiv'd, and both my eyes put out,
Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze.' [3]

'High are thy thoughts,
O son, but nourish them, and let them soar
To what height sacred virtue and true worth
Can raise them, though above example high.' [4]

[1] Vacation Exercise, anno ætatis 19.
[2] *Paradise Regained*, book i. 67–69.
[3] *Samson Agonistes*, 30–34.
[4] *Paradise Regained*, book i. 229–232.

CHAPTER II.

CAMBRIDGE CAREER, SEVEN YEARS—RESIDENCE AT HORTON, FIVE YEARS.

A.D. 1625—1638. A. ÆT. 17—30.

'AFTER I had acquired a proficiency in various languages, and had made a considerable progress in philosophy, my father sent me to the University of Cambridge. Here I passed seven years in the usual course of instruction and study, with the approbation of the good, and without any stain upon my character, till I took the degree of Master of Arts. After this I did not, as this miscreant (Salmasius) feigns, run away into Italy, but of my own accord retired to my father's house, whither I was accompanied by the regrets of most of the fellows of the College, who showed me no common marks of friendship and esteem. On my father's estate, where he had determined to pass the remainder of

his days, I enjoyed an interval of uninterrupted leisure, which I entirely devoted to the perusal of the Greek and Latin classics, though I occasionally visited the metropolis, either for the sake of purchasing books, or of learning something new in mathematics or in music, in which I, at that time, found a source of pleasure and amusement. In this manner I spent five years till my mother's death.'

'Though you pretend to hate the tender Muses, I think that you do not really hate them; for neither, my father, did you order me to go where the broad beaten path lies open, where as a merchant I might hope to amass wealth; nor do you hurry me to the laws and ill-kept ordinances, where as a lawyer my ears would have been filled with senseless clamours, but desiring rather to enrich my mind, you suffered me to go far from the noise of the city, and buried in deep retreats, the joyful companion of Apollo. Go, now, gather wealth ye who will—what greater wealth could my father have

[1] *The Second Defence*, vol. i. p. 254. Sara Milton, the poet's mother, died April 3, 1637, and is buried in the chancel of Horton Church. In the Register may be found, 'Sara, uxor Johñis Milton, generosi, Aprilis 6^to^: obiit 3^o^.'

bestowed upon me? I will, therefore, take my seat, the lowest and least of those who are crowned with ivy and laurel; and shall not pass all my days in obscurity.' [1]

'Me at present that city contains which the Thames washes with its ebbing wave; and me, not unwilling, my father's house now possesses. At present it is not my care to revisit the reedy Cam; nor does the love of my forbidden rooms yet cause me grief. Nor do naked fields please me, where soft shades are not to be had.[2] How ill that place suits the votaries of Apollo! Nor am I in the humour still to bear the threats of a harsh master, and other things not to be submitted to by my genius. If this be exile, to have gone to my father's house, and, free from cares, to be pursuing agreeable relaxations, then certainly I refuse neither the name nor the lot of a fugitive, and gladly I enjoy the condition of exile.[3] For it is in

[1] *Ad Patrem. Sylv.* vi. 66, &c.

[2] He alludes to the country around Cambridge.

[3] Was Milton rusticated? was he flogged at Cambridge? To the last question, no, as may be argued from his own words; to the first also, no, he did not lose a term. We know he disliked Cambridge, and the then system of education; he was at first unpopular,

my power to give my leisure up to the placid Muses ; and books, which are my life, have me all to themselves. When I am wearied, the pomp of the winding theatre takes me hence, and the garrulous stage calls me to its noisy applauses. But not always within doors do we mope ; the grove also, planted with thick elms,[1] has our company ; and very often here you may see troops of maidens passing by. Ah! how often have I seen eyes surpassing all gems, and necks twice whiter than the way which flows tinged with pure nectar ; and the exquisite grace of the forehead ; and the trembling hair, which cheating Love spreads as his golden nets ; and the inviting cheeks, compared with which hyacinthine purple is poor. But for me, while the forbearance of the blind boy allows it, I prepare as soon as possible to leave these happy walls, and flee far from the sorceress Circe. It is fixed that I go back to the rushy marshes of Cam, and once more

afterwards not ; he further had a disagreement with his tutor Chappel, and withdrew for part of a term, but was not 'rusticated' in the proper and usual sense of the word. On his return he became the pupil of Tovey.

[1] Milton's favourite tree.

approach the murmur of the hoarse-murmuring school.'[1]

'When your letter arrived I was strenuously engaged in that work (*Sylv.* iv., *Naturam non pati senium*: "That nature is not subject to old age") concerning which I had given you some obscure hints, and the execution of which could not be delayed. One of the fellows of our college, who was to be the respondent in a philosophical disputation for his degree, engaged me to furnish him with some verses, which are annually required on this occasion, since he himself was then intent on more serious studies. Of these verses I sent you a printed copy, since I knew both your discriminating taste in poetry, and your candid allowances for poetry like mine.'[2]

'Often I scorned the arrows of Cupid as but boyish darts, and derided thy deity, most great Love. The Cyprian boy could not bear this. It was spring, and the first of May. Love stands by my bed, and said, "Better hadst thou been wise by the example of others; now thou shalt thyself be a

[1] Elegy I. To Charles Diodati. Masson's translation in *Life of Milton*, vol. i.

[2] Letter III. To Alexander Gill.

witness what my right hand can do." Anon I am taking my pleasure now in those places in the city where our citizens walk. A frequent crowd—in appearance, as it might seem, a crowd of goddesses—is going and coming splendidly along the middle of the ways. I do not austerely shun those agreeable sights. Too imprudent, I let *my* eyes meet *their* eyes, and am unable to master them. One by chance I beheld pre-eminent above the rest, and that glance was the beginning of my malady. Not far off was the sly god himself lurking. Immediately unaccustomed pains were felt in my heart. Being in love, I inly burn; I am all one flame. Meanwhile she who alone pleased me was snatched away from my eyes never to return. What shall I, unfortunate, do? O would it were given me once to behold the beloved countenance, and to speak a sad word or two in her presence! Perchance she is not made of adamant; perchance she might not be deaf to my prayers. Spare me, I pray, thou winged god of love. Take away, at length, and yet take not away my pains. I know not why, but every lover is sweetly miserable. But do thou kindly grant, if ever hereafter I and

my love meet, one arrow may transfix the two and make us lovers.' [1]

'Having been invited by you (his tutor, Thomas Young) to your part of the country, as soon as spring is a little advanced, I will gladly come to enjoy the delights of the year, and not less of your conversation; and will then withdraw myself from the din of town for a little to your Stoa of the Iceni (these were the ancient inhabitants of Suffolk, &c., and the phrase *Stoa Icenorum* is a pun on Young's living of *Stow*market, in Suffolk), as to that most celebrated porch of Zeno, or the Tusculan villa of Cicero.' [2]

'How can I hope for your [3] good will, when in this so great concourse, as many heads as I behold with my eyes, almost the same number do I see of visages bearing malice against me; so that I seem to have come as an *orator* to persons not *exorable?* Of so much efficacy in producing private grudges

[1] Elegy VII. (Masson). Anno ætatis 19.

[2] Letter IV. (Masson). To Thomas Young. Milton is said to have planted a mulberry-tree in the Vicarage garden. 'No fact is better attested than that great men, wherever they go, plant mulberry-trees.'—Masson's *Life of Milton.*

[3] His fellow-collegians.

is the rivalry even in schools of those who follow different studies or different methods in the same studies. Nevertheless, that I may not wholly despond, I do, unless I am mistaken, see here and there some, who, even by their silent aspect, signify to me not obscurely how well they wish me; by whom, very few though they be, I, for my part, prefer being approved than by numberless hundreds of unskilled ones. . . . If, however, there is any one who, scorning terms of peace, has declared truceless war against me, him at present I will not disdain to beg and entreat, that, setting aside rivalry for a little, he be among us a fair arbiter in this debate (whether day or night is the more excellent?), and do not for the fault of the orator, if there is any, bring into obloquy a cause the best and most illustrious possible.[1]

'When lately, Academicians, I returned hither from that city which is the head of cities (London) filled, even to repletion, with all the delights with which that place overflows, I hoped to have again, for some time, that literary leisure, in which as a mode of life I believe, that even celestial souls

[1] Prolusio I. (Masson's translation).

rejoice; and it was quite my intention to shut myself up in literature, and study sweetest philosophy day and night. For the change from work to pleasure always removes the fatigue of satiety, and causes tasks left unfinished to be sought again with more alacrity. But, just as I was getting into a glow, this almost annual celebration of a very old custom has suddenly called me, and dragged me from these studies, and I am ordered to transfer to trifles and the excogitation of new frivolities those pains which I had at first destined for the acquisition of wisdom. . . . Truly there is no reason why I should be ashamed to play the fool a little, especially at the bidding of him whose business it is, as our ædile, to take charge of these, so to speak, our solemn games. Then also there drew and invited me, in no ordinary degree, to undertake this part, your very recently discovered graciousness to me—you, I mean, who are of the same college with me. For when, some few months ago, I was about to perform an oratorical office before you, and was under the impression that any lucubrations whatsoever of mine would be the reverse of agreeable to you and would have

more merciful judges in Æacus, and Minos than almost any of you would prove, truly, beyond my fancy, beyond my hope if I had any, they were, as I heard, nay, as I myself felt, received with the not ordinary applause of all—yea, of those who, at other times, were, on account of disagreements in our studies, altogether of an angry and unfriendly spirit towards me. A generous mode of exercising rivalry this, and not unworthy of a royal breast, if, when friendship itself is wont often to misconstrue much that is blamelessly done, yet then sharp and hostile enmity did not grudge to interpret much that was perchance erroneous, and not a little, doubtless, that was unskilfully said, more clemently than I merited! . . .

'Truly I am highly delighted, and wonderfully pervaded with pleasure when I see myself surrounded, and on all sides begirt with so great a crowd of most learned men; and yet again, when I descend into myself, and secretly, as it were with inturned eyes, behold my weakness, I indeed am conscious of often blushing to myself, and a certain intruding sadness depresses and chokes my rising joy. . . . Let no one wonder if I triumph,

as one placed among the stars, that so many men eminent for erudition, and nearly the whole University have flocked hither. For I hardly think that more went of old to Athens to hear the two supreme orators, Demosthenes and Æschines, contending for the sovereignty of eloquence, nor that such felicity ever befel Hortensius when speaking, nor that so many extraordinarily cultured men ever graced with their company a speech of Cicero's; so that, though I should discharge this duty all the more lamely, it will yet be no despicable honour for me even to have uttered words in so great a concourse and assembly of most excellent men. . . . I have said all this not in a spirit of boasting; for I would that there were now granted me any such honeyed or rather nectarean flow of eloquence as of old ever steeped, and, as it were, celestially bedewed Athenian or Roman genius; I would that it were given me to suck out the whole marrow of persuasion, and to pilfer the very scrip of Mercury himself, and thoroughly to exhaust all the hiding-places of the elegancies, so that I might bring hither something worthy of so great expectation,

of so illustrious an assembly, of so polished and delicate ears. . . .

'However this may be, I entreat you, my hearers, not to repent of giving yourselves a brief holiday with these frivolities of mine; for all the gods themselves are known often, the care of their heavenly polity being laid aside for the time, to have been present at the spectacle of pigmies fighting; sometimes even they are related, not disdaining humble cottages, and received with a poor hospitality, to have made a meal of beans and leeks. I, in like manner, beseech and beg you, excellent hearers, that this poor little feast of mine, such as it is, may pass for a feast to your subtle and knowing palates. Truly, though I know very many sciolists with whom it is a constant custom, if they are ignorant of anything, haughtily and foolishly to contemn that in others as something not worth *their* bestowing pains upon —this one, for example, impertinently carping at Dialectics, which he never could acquire, and this other making no account of Philosophy, because forsooth Nature, that fairest of the goddesses, never deemed him worthy of such an honour as that she

should let him behold her naked charms—yet I will not grudge to praise, to the extent of my power, festivities and jests, in which I do acknowledge my faculty to be very slight; premising only this, that it seems an arduous and far from easy task for me this day to praise jocularity in serious terms.[1]

'Nor are my praises undeserved! What is there that sooner conciliates and longer retains friendship than a pleasant and festive disposition? Let there be a person who has no jests, nor fun, nor nice little facetiæ in him, and you will hardly find one to whom he is agreeable and welcome. . . . And now, released from all oratorical laws, we are about to plunge into comic licence. In which, if by chance, I shall outgo a finger's breadth, as they say, my proper character and the rigid laws of modesty, know, fellow-academicians, that I have thrown off and for a while laid aside my proper self in your interest; or, if anything shall be said loosely or floridly, consider it suggested to me not

[1] The thesis is, 'That occasional sportive exercises are not inconsistent with the studies of Philosophy.'

by my own mind and disposition, but by the rule of the time and the genius of the place.[1]

'By what merit of mine I have been created Dictator of the labouring and all but down-tumbling commonwealth of fools, I am verily ignorant. And wherefore I? when that very chief and standard-bearer of all the sophisters was both eagerly ambitious of this office, and would have most valiantly performed its duties. . . . But why is it that I am so suddenly made Father? (the elected president on these occasions was called "the Father"). By some of you I used lately to be nicknamed "the Lady."[2] Why, seem I then too little of a man? Do pert grammaticasters thus attribute the *propria quæ maribus* to the feminine gender? Is it because I never was able to quaff huge tankards lustily, or, in fine, because I never proved my manhood in the same way as those debauched blackguards? I would they could as easily doff

[1] 'Milton here,' Masson observes, 'breaks off his serious introductory discourse, and dashes, as the leader of the absurdities of the day, into an expressly comic and even coarse harangue.'

[2] He was so fair that they called him 'the Lady of Christ's College.' —Aubrey.

the ass as I can whatever of the woman is in me! But see how absurdly and unreflectingly they have upbraided me with that which I, on the best of grounds, will turn to my glory. For Demosthenes himself was also called too little of a man by his rivals and adversaries. Quintus Hortensius,[1] too, the most renowned of all orators after M. Tullius, was nicknamed "a Dionysiac singing-woman"[2] by Lucius Torquatus. To whom he (Hortensius) says, "I had rather indeed be 'Dionysia' than what you are, O Torquatus, *ἄμουσος, ἀγροδίαιτος, ἀπρόσυτος.* . . .

'And now leaping over the university statutes, as if they were the walls of Romulus, I run across from Latin to English.[3]

'Although nothing is more agreeable and desirable to me, my hearers, than the sight of you and the constant company of gowned men, and

[1] By all means read the deeply interesting account of this Hortensius in Lempriere or Smith.

[2] 'Dionysia psaltria' is rather 'Dionysia,' a singing-woman.

[3] Prolusio VI. (Masson's translation). Then follows in verse the address to his native language, the piece among his miscellaneous poems, headed, 'Anno ætatis 19. At a Vacation Exercise,' thus restored by Masson to its proper connection, though Keightley had already done this before him.

also this honourable office of speaking, which on more occasions than one I have with no unpleasant pains discharged among you; yet, to confess the actual truth, it always so happens that, though neither my genius, nor the nature of my studies, is at all out of keeping with the oratorical office, nevertheless I scarcely ever come to speak of my own free will and choice. Had it been in my power, I should not unwillingly have spared myself even this evening's labour; for, as I have learned this from the books and sayings of the most learned men, that, no more in the orator than in the poet, can anything common or mediocre be tolerated, and that it behoves him who would truly be and be considered an orator, to be instructed and thoroughly finished in a certain circular education of all the arts and all science, so, my age not permitting this, I would rather be working with severe study for that true reputation, by the preliminary practice of the necessary means, than hurrying on a false reputation by a forced and precocious style. In which thought and purpose of mind, while I am daily tossed and kindled more and more, I have never

experienced any hindrance and delay more grievous than the frequent mischief of interruption, and nothing more nurturing to my genius and conservative of its good health, as contradistinguished from that of the body, than a learned and liberal lecture. I call to witness for myself the groves, and rivers, and the beloved village elms, under which in the last past summer (if it is right to speak the secrets of goddesses), I remember so pleasantly having had supreme delight with the Muses; where I too, among rural scenes and remote forests, seemed as if I could have grown and vegetated through a hidden eternity. Here also I should have hoped for the same large liberty of retirement, had not this troublesome business of speech-making quite unseasonably interposed itself; which so disagreeably drove off my sacred sleep,[1] so drew off my mind fixed on other matters, and was such an impediment and burden among the precipitous difficulties of the Arts, that, losing all hope of continuing my quiet, I began sorrowfully to think how far off I was from that tranquillity which letters first promised me—that

[1] The divine sleep of Hesiod.

life would be bitter amid these heats and tossings, that it would be better even to have lost knowledge of the Arts altogether. And so, scarce master of myself, I undertook the rash design of praising Ignorance, as having none of these inflictions disturbing it; and I proposed as a subject of debate, which of the two, Art or Ignorance, made its votaries happier.[1] I know not what it is, but either fate or my genius has willed that I should not depart from my once-begun love of the Muses; nay, blind Chance herself, as if suddenly become prudent and provident, seems to have set herself against the same result. Sooner than I could have anticipated, Ignorance has found an advocate for herself; and Knowledge is left to be defended by me.[2]

'But if you will know what I am myself doing (if, indeed, you think it of so much consequence to know if I am doing anything), here is the fact:—We are engaged in singing the heavenly birth of the King of Peace, and the happy age promised by the holy books, and the infant cries

[1] The thesis of this Prolusion is 'Art, i.e. Knowledge, is more conducive to human happiness than Ignorance.'

[2] Prolusio VII. (Masson's translation). Styled by him 'one of the noblest pieces of Latin prose ever penned by an Englishman.'

and cradling in a manger under a poor roof of that God who rules, with his Father, the kingdom of heaven, and the sky with the new-sprung star in it, and the ethereal choirs of hymning angels, and the gods of heathen eld suddenly fleeing to their endangered fanes. This is the gift which we have presented to Christ's natal day. On that very morning, at daybreak, it was first conceived. The verses, which are composed in the vernacular, await your criticism; you shall be the judge to whom I shall recite them.'

'Having spent his first onset (the son of Bishop Hall, in his "Modest Confutation against a slanderous and scurrilous Libel"), not in confuting but in a reasonless defaming of the book (the Animadversions), the method of his malice hurries him on to attempt the like against the author, but "having

[1] Elegy VI. 79–90. Thus headed, 'To Charles Diodati, residing in the country, who, when he had written on the 13th of December, and had asked (the author) to excuse his verses, if they were less good than usual, on the ground that in the midst of the festivities with which he had been received by his friends, he was unable to give a sufficient happy attention to the Muses, had the following answer sent him.' We need hardly add that Milton, in the part of the elegy we have quoted, alludes to his Ode on the Nativity.

no certain notice of me," as he professes, "further than what he gathers from the Animadversions," blunders at me for the rest, and flings out stray crimes at a venture. To me, readers, it happens as a singular contentment, and let it be to good men no light satisfaction, that the slanderer here confesses that he has "no further notice of me than his own conjecture." Although it had been honest to have inquired, before he uttered such infamous words, and I am credibly informed he did inquire; but finding small comfort from the intelligence which he received, whereon to ground the falsities which he had provided, thought it his likeliest course, under a pretended ignorance, to let drive at random, lest he should lose his odd ends, which from some penurious book of characters he had been culling out and would fain apply. Not caring to burden me (i.e. he did do so) with those vices, whereof, among whom my conversation hath been, I have been ever least suspected; perhaps not without some subtlety to cast me into envy, by bringing on me a necessity to enter into mine own praises. In which argument I know every wise

man is more unwillingly drawn to speak, than the most refining ear can be averse to hear.

'Nevertheless, since I dare not wish to pass this life unpersecuted of slanderous tongues, for God hath told us that, to be generally praised, is woful, I shall rely on His promise to free the innocent from causeless aspersions; whereof nothing sooner can assure me, than if I shall feel Him now assisting me in the just vindication of myself, which yet I could defer, it being more meet, that to those other matters of public debatement in this book I should give attendance first, but that I fear it would but harm the truth for me to reason in her behalf, so long as I should suffer my honest estimation to lie unpurged from these insolent suspicions. And if I shall be large, or unwonted in justifying myself to those who know me not, for else it would be needless, let them consider that a short slander will ofttimes reach further than a long apology; and that he who will do justly to all men, must begin from knowing how, if it so happen, to be not unjust to himself. I must be thought, if this libeller (for now he shows himself to be so) can find belief, after an inordinate and riotous

youth spent at the university, to have been at length "vomited out thence." For which commodious lie, that he may be encouraged in this trade another time, I thank him; for it hath given me an apt occasion to acknowledge publicly, with all grateful mind, that more than ordinary favour and respect, which I found above any of my equals at the hands of those courteous and learned men, the fellows of that college wherein I spent some years: who at my parting, after I had taken two degrees, as the manner is, signified many ways how much better it would content them that I would stay; as by many letters full of kindness and loving respect, both before that time and long after, I was assured of their singular good affection towards me. Which being likewise propense to all such as were for their studious and civil life worthy of esteem, I could not wrong their judgments and upright intentions, so much as to think I had that regard from them for other cause, than that I might be still encouraged to proceed in the honest and laudable courses, of which they apprehended I had given good proof. And to those ingenuous and friendly men, who were ever the countenancers of

virtuous and hopeful wits, I wish the best and happiest things, that friends in absence wish one to another.

'As for the common approbation or dislike of that place, as now it is, that I should esteem or disesteem myself, or any other, the more for that, too simple and too credulous is the Confuter, if he think to obtain with me, or any right discerner. That suburb sink, as this rude scavenger calls it, wherein I dwell shall be in my account a more honourable place than his university; which, as in the time of her better health, and mine own younger judgment, I never greatly admired, so now much less. But he follows me to the city, still usurping and forging beyond his book notice, which only he affirms to have had; "and where my morning haunts are, he wisses not." It is wonder that, being so rare an alchymist of slander, he could not extract that, as well as the university vomit, and the suburb sink, which his art could distil so cunningly; but because his lembec fails him, to give him and envy[1] the more vexation I will tell him.

[1] The Latin *invidia* = odium.

'Those morning haunts are where they should be, at home; not sleeping, or concocting the surfeits of an irregular feast, but up and stirring, in winter often ere the sound of any bell awake men to labour, or to devotion; in summer as oft with the birds that first rouses, or not much tardier, to read good authors, or cause them to be read, till the attention be weary, or memory have its full fraught: then, with useful and generous labours preserving the body's health and hardiness to render lightsome, clear, and not lumpish obedience to the mind, to the cause of religion, and our country's liberty, when it shall require firm hearts in sound bodies to stand and cover their stations, rather than to see the ruin of our protestation, and the enforcement of a slavish life.

'These are the morning practices: proceed now to the afternoon; "in playhouses," he says, "and the bordelloes." Your intelligence, unfaithful spy of Canaan? In the Animadversions, saith he, I find the mention of old cloaks, false beards, night-walkers, and salt lotion; therefore, the animadverter haunts playhouses and bordelloes; for if he did not, how could he speak of such gear? Now,

that he may know what it is to be a child, and yet to meddle with edged tools, I turn his antistrophon upon his own head : the Confuter knows that these things are the furniture of such places, therefore, by the same reason, the Confuter hath been traced there.

'But since there is such necessity to the hearsay[1] of a tire,[2] a periwig, or a vizard, that plays must have been seen, what difficulty was there in that? when in the colleges so many of the young divines, and those in next aptitude to divinity,[3] have been seen so often upon the stage, writhing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antic and dishonest gestures of Trinculoes, buffoons, and bawds; prostituting the shame of that ministry, which either they had, or were nigh having, to the eyes of courtiers and court ladies, with their grooms and mademoiselles. There, while they acted and overacted, among other young scholars, I was a spectator; they thought themselves gallant men, and I thought them fools; they made sport, and I

[1] The hearing of, knowing about.
[2] A head-dress.
[3] Divinity students.

laughed; they mispronounced, and I misliked; and, to make up the Atticism,[1] they were out, and I hissed. Judge now whether so many good text-men were not sufficient to instruct me of false beards and vizards, without more expositors; and how can this Confuter take the face to object to me the seeing of that which his reverend prelates allow, and incite their young disciples to act? For if it be unlawful[2] to sit and behold a mercenary comedian personating that which is least unseemly for a hireling to do, how much more blameful is it to endure the sight of as vile things acted by persons either entered, or presently to enter, into the ministry; and how much more foul and ignominious for them to be actors!

'But because, as well by this upbraiding as by other suspicious glancings in his book, he would seem privily to point me out to his readers, as one whose custom of life were not honest, but licentious, I shall entreat to be borne with, though I digress; and in a way not often trod, acquaint ye

[1] He is here imitating a passage in Demosthenes' speech against Æschines.

[2] He does not say it is, but only makes use of the *à fortiori* argument.

with the sum of my thoughts in this matter, through the course of my years and studies: although I am not ignorant how hazardous it will be to do this under the nose of the envious, as it were in skirmish to change the compact order, and instead of outward actions, to bring inmost thoughts into front. And I must tell ye, readers, that by this sort of men I have been already bitten at; yet shall they not for me know how slightly they are esteemed, unless they have so much learning as to read what in Greek ἀπειροκαλία[1] is, which, together with envy, is the common disease of those who censure books that are not for their reading. With me it fares now, as with him whose outward garment hath been injured and ill-bedighted; for having no other shift, what help but to turn the inside outwards, especially if the lining be of the same, or, as it is sometimes, much better? So if my name and outward demeanour be not evident enough to defend me, I must make trial if the discovery of my inmost thoughts can: wherein of two purposes, both honest and both sincere, the one perhaps I shall not miss; although I fail to

[1] Ignorance of what is beautiful, polite, and refined.

gain belief with others, of being such as my perpetual thoughts shall here disclose me, I may yet not fail of success in persuading some to be such really themselves, as they cannot believe me to be more than what I feign.'[1]

"To the service of the Church, by the intentions of my parents and friends, I was destined of a child, and in mine own resolutions; till coming to some maturity of years, and perceiving what tyranny had invaded the Church, that he who would take orders must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which, unless he took with a conscience that would retch (stretch), he must either straight perjure, or split his faith; I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing. Howsoever, thus church-outed by the prelates, hence may appear the right I have to meddle in these matters, as before the necessity and constraint appeared.'[2]

'Besides that, in sundry respects, I must acknowledge me to profit by you whenever we meet, you

[1] *An Apology for Smectymnuus*, vol. iii. pp. 109–116.
[2] *The Reason of Church Government*, vol. ii. p. 482.

are often to me, and were yesterday especially, as a good watchman to admonish that the hours of the night pass on (for so I call my life, as yet obscure and unserviceable to mankind), and that the day with me is at hand, wherein Christ commands all to labour, while there is light. Which, because I am persuaded you do to no other purpose than out of a true desire that God should be honoured in every one, I therefore think myself bound, though unasked, to give you an account, as oft as occasion is, of this my tardy moving, according to the precept of my conscience, which I firmly trust is not without God. Yet now I will not strain for any set apology, but only refer myself to what my mind shall have at any time to declare herself at her best case.

'But if you think, as you said, that too much love of learning is in fault, and that I have given up myself to dream away my years in the arms of studious retirement, like Endymion with the moon, as the tale of Latinus goes; yet consider that if it were no more but the mere love of learning, whether it proceed from a principle bad, good, or natural, it could not have held out thus long against so strong

opposition on the other side of every kind. For if it be bad, why should not all the fond hopes that forward youth and vanity are fledge with, together with gain, pride, and ambition, call me forward more powerfully than a poor, regardless, and unprofitable sin of curiosity should be able to withhold me; whereby a man cuts himself off from all action, and becomes the most helpless, pusillanimous, and unweaponed creature in the world, the most unfit and unable to do that which all mortals most aspire to—either to be useful to his friends, or to offend his enemies. Or, if it be to be thought a natural proneness, there is against that a much more potent inclination inbred, which about this time of a man's life solicits most, the desire of house and family of his own, to which nothing is esteemed more helpful than the early entering into credible employment, and nothing hindering than this affected solitariness. And though this were enough, yet there is to this another act, if not of pure, yet of refined nature, no less available to dissuade prolonged obscurity—a desire of honour and repute and immortal fame, seated in the breast of every true scholar; which all make haste to by the

readiest ways of publishing and divulging conceived merits, as well those that shall, as those that never shall, obtain it. Nature, therefore, would presently work the more prevalent way, if there were nothing but this inferior bent of herself to restrain her. Lastly, the love of learning, as it is the pursuit of something good, it would sooner follow the more excellent and supreme good known and presented, and so be quickly diverted from the empty and fantastic chase of shadows and notions, to the solid good flowing from due and timely obedience to that command in the Gospel set out by the terrible fearing of him that hid the talent.

'It is more probable, therefore, that not the endless delight of speculation, but this very consideration of that great commandment, does not press forward, as soon as many do, to undergo, but keeps off, with a sacred reverence and religious advisement how *best* to undergo, not taking thought of being *late*, so it give advantage to be more *fit*; for those that were latest lost nothing, when the master of the vineyard came to give each one his hire. And here I am come to a stream-head, copious enough to disburden itself, like Nilus,

at seven mouths into an ocean. But then I should also run into a reciprocal contradiction of ebbing and flowing at once, and do that which I excuse myself for not doing—preach and not preach. Yet, that you may see that I am something suspicious of myself, and do take notice of a certain belatedness in me, I am the bolder to send you some of my nightward thoughts some while since, because they come in not altogether unfitly made up in a Petrarchian stanza which I told you of: (here follows the sonnet on his being arrived at the age of twenty-three, which fixes the date of his letter to be 1631). By this, I believe, you may well repent of having made mention at all of this matter; for, if I have not all this while won you to this, I have certainly wearied you of it. This, therefore, alone may be a sufficient reason for me to keep me as I am, lest, having thus tired you singly, I should deal worse with a whole congregation, and spoil all the patience of a parish; for I myself do not only see my own tediousness, but now grow offended with it, that has hindered me thus long from coming to the last and best period of my letter, and that

which must now chiefly work my pardon, that I am—your true and unfeigned friend.'[1]

'Since you the day before yesterday presented me with an elegant and beautiful poem in hendecasyllabic verse, which far exceeds the worth of gold, you have increased my solicitude to discover in what manner I may requite the favour of so acceptable a gift. I had by me at the time no composition in a like style, which I thought at all fit to come in competition with the excellence of your performance. I send you, therefore, a composition which is not entirely my own, but the production of a truly inspired bard, from whom I last week rendered this ode into Greek heroic verse, as I was lying in bed before the day dawned, without any previous deliberation, but from I know not what sudden impulse. By his help who does not less surpass you in his subject than you do me

[1] This interesting letter, the only one in English which has come down to us, preserved in Milton's autograph in Trinity College Library, Cambridge, and two drafts of which are given in Birch's edition, vol. I. iv.–vi., was written in reply to a friend who had remonstrated with him for his aimless life, and importuned him to take Orders. Its great autobiographical value is apparent. Was it addressed to his tutor Young, whom, we know from the date of his fourth Latin letter, he was visiting two years previously?

in the execution, I have sent something which may serve to restore the equilibrium between us. If you see reason to find fault with any particular passage, I must inform you that, from the time I left your school, this is the first and the last piece I have ever composed in Greek; since, as you know, I have attended more to Latin and to English composition. He who at this time employs his labour and his time in writing Greek is in danger of writing what will never be read (singing to the deaf). Adieu, and expect to see me, God willing, at London, on Monday, among the booksellers. In the meantime, if you have interest enough with that doctor who is the master of the college, to promote my business, I beseech you to see him as soon as possible, and to act as your friendship for me may prompt.'[1]

[1] Letter V. To Alexander Gill, i.e. the younger. We now follow Milton to Horton, where, we may remark, he wrote *Comus*, *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and *Lycidas*. His autobiography is here derived from the brief sketches in the *Sec. Def.* already given, and from three of his Latin letters. The one just quoted is dated, 'From our suburban residence, *E nostro suburbano*, December 4, 1634.' The Greek composition here alluded to is his translation of Ps. cxiv., his English version of which is his earliest poetical composition extant; it was written at the age of fifteen, as was also his version of Ps. cxxxvi., so well known in our hymn-books.

'I have many more excuses for not writing than you; for it is well known, and you well know, that I am naturally slow in writing, and averse to write; while you, either from disposition or from habit, seem to have little reluctance in engaging in these literary addresses. It is also in my favour that your method of study is such as to admit of frequent interruptions, in which you visit your friends, write much, sometimes make a journey; but my genius is such that no delay, no love of ease, no care or thought almost of anything, holds me back that I should not arrive whither I am bound, and accomplish some great period of my studies. From this, and no other reasons, it has come to pass that I do not readily employ my pen in any gratuitous exertions; but I am not, nevertheless, O our Theodotus, a very sluggish correspondent; nor have I ever left any letter of yours unanswered till another came. But what I blame you for is, the not keeping your promise of paying me a visit when you left the city. What can occasion your silence? Is it ill health? Are there in those parts any literati with whom you may play and prattle, as we were wont together? How long do you stay among those

Hyperboreans? Lately, when I was accidentally informed in London that you were in town, immediately, and as it were with a shout, I rushed to your rooms; but it was only the shadow of a dream, for you were nowhere to be found. Wherefore, fly hither quicker, and settle yourself in some place which may give me the hope that we may at least sometimes exchange visits. But this is as it pleases God. I have much to say to you concerning myself and my studies, but I would rather do it when we meet; and now, to-morrow, we are about to return to that country residence of ours (Horton), and the journey so presses, that I have but just time to scribble this.'[1]

'It is impossible for me not to love men like you; for whatever the Deity may have bestowed upon me in other respects, He has certainly inspired me, if any ever were inspired, with a passion for the good and beautiful. Nor did Ceres, according to the fable, ever seek her daughter Proserpine with such unceasing solicitude as I have sought this idea of the beautiful in all the forms and appearances of things (for many are the shapes of

[1] Letter VI. To Charles Diodati, London, Sept. 7 1637.

things divine). Day and night I am wont to continue my search, and I follow it leading me on with certain assured traces. Hence I feel an irresistible impulse to cultivate the friendship of him who, despising the prejudices and false conceptions of the vulgar, dares to think, to speak, and to be that which the highest wisdom has, in every age, taught to be the best. But if my disposition, or my destiny, were such that I could, without any conflict and by my own exertions, emerge to the highest pitch of distinction and praise, there would, nevertheless, be no prohibition, either human or divine, against my constantly cherishing and revering those who have either obtained the same degree of glory, or are successfully labouring to obtain it. But now I know you wish to have your curiosity satisfied. You make many anxious inquiries, even as to what I am thinking of. Hear me, Theodotus, but in your ear, lest I blush; and allow me for a little to speak big words to you. Do you ask what I am thinking of?—So may the good God help me, of Immortality. But what am I doing?—I am pluming my wings and preparing to fly; but my Pegasus has not yet feathers enough to bear it

aloft. Let us be lowly wise! I will now tell you seriously what I am thinking of—of migrating into some inn of the lawyers,[1] wherever there is a pleasant and shady walk, because there I shall have a more convenient habitation among a few companions if I wish to remain at home, and more suitable head-quarters if I choose to go abroad. Where now I am, as you know, I am buried in obscurity. You shall also be better informed respecting my studies. I have, by a consecutive course of reading, brought down the Grecian affairs to the time when they ceased to be Greeks. I was long employed on the obscure history of the Italians under the Lombards, the Franks, and Germans, to the time when they received their liberty from Rudolf, King of Germany; from that time it will be better to read separately the particular transactions of each state. But how are *you* employed? How long will you hang over domestic matters, forgetful of your city connexions? But unless this novercal war be worse than the Dacian, or the Sarmatian, you will certainly require to make haste, so as at least to come with us into winter-

[1] This he did not do, but went his continental tour instead.

quarters. In the meantime, if you can do it without inconvenience, I beg you to send me Justinian, the historian of the Venetians. I will either keep it carefully till your arrival, or, if you had rather, will soon send it back again.'[1]

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PASSAGES FROM MILTON'S POETRY.

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stol'n on his wing my three-and-twenti'th year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom show'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
That I to manhood am arriv'd so near,[2]
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits indu'th.
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure ev'n,
To that same lot, however mean, or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heav'n;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.[3]

[1] Letter VII. To Charles Diodati, London, September 23, 1637.

[2] At forty he appeared ten years younger, *Sec. Def.* vol. i. p. 236.

[3] Sonnet VII. (Warton's edition), On his being arrived to the age of 23.

O Nightingale, that on yon bloomy spray
Warbl'st at eve, when all the woods are still,
Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,
While the jolly hours lead on propitious May;
Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day,
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,
Portend success in love; O! if Jove's will
Have link'd that amorous power to thy soft lay,
Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate
Foretell my hopeless doom in some grove nigh:
As thou from year to year hast sung too late
For my relief, yet had'st no reason why;
Whether the Muse, or Love,[1] call thee his mate,
Both them I serve, and of their train am I.[2]

For we were nurs'd upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock by fountain, shade, and rill.
Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
We drove afield; and both together heard
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
Batt'ning our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at ev'ning, bright,

[1] Aubrey says that Milton was a poet when he was ten years old; and he was in love when he was nineteen. See Elegy VII.

[2] Sonnet I. To the Nightingale.

Toward Heav'n's descent had slop'd his westering wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Temper'd to the oaten flute;
Rough Satyrs danc'd, and Fauns with clov'n heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long,
And old Damœtas lov'd to hear our song.[1]

He (St. Peter) shook his mitr'd locks, and stern bespake,
'How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
Enow of such as for their bellies' sake,
Creep and intrude, and climb into the fold!
Of other care they little reck'ning make,
Than how to scramble at the shearer's feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest;
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learn'd aught else the least
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed.'[2]

[1] Lycidas, 23–36. This pastoral elegy is an allegory, and the passage here cited means that Milton and his friend Edward King were fellow-students at Christ's. 'The hill here is, of course, Cambridge; the joint feeding of the flocks is companionship in study; the rural ditties on the oaten flute are academic iambics and elegiacs; and old Damœtas is perhaps Chappel, Milton's tutor.'—*Masson.*

[2] Lycidas, 112–125. Edward King was intended for orders, which his friend, 'church-outed by the prelates,' had long since given up all idea of. We here see what he thought of the state of the Church at this time. His intention is evident from the title prefixed in 1645. 'In this Monody the author bewails a learned friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester, in the Irish seas,

1637. And by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted clergy then in their height.' The conclusion of this, as of the *Epitaphium Damonis*, in memoriam of his still dearer friend Charles Diodati, so well loved and so soon lost, is exceedingly beautiful. They are both modelled after the eleventh eclogue of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, and show that the highest flight of poetical fancy is in strict accordance with sound scriptural truth. Death has lost its sting. Death is not death, but introductory to a higher state of existence. Dido, Lycidas, Damon are not dead, but only 'gone for an hour—gone for a minute from this room into the next.' Therefore weep no more.

CHAPTER III.

CONTINENTAL TOUR—POLITIÇAL LIFE.

A.D. 1638—1648. A. ÆT. 30—40.

'I THEN,' i.e. after the five years spent at Horton, 'became anxious to visit foreign parts, and particularly Italy. My father gave me his permission, and I left home with one servant. On my departure, the celebrated Henry Wootton, who had long been King James's ambassador at Venice, gave me a signal proof of his regard in an elegant letter which he wrote, breathing not only the warmest friendship, but containing some maxims of conduct which I found very useful in my travels. The noble Thomas Scudamore, King Charles's ambassador, to whom I carried letters of recommendation, received me most courteously at Paris. His lordship gave me a card of introduction to the learned Hugo Grotius, at that time ambassador from the

Queen of Sweden to the French court, whose acquaintance I anxiously desired, and to whose house I was accompanied by some of his lordship's friends. A few days after, when I set out for Italy, he gave me letters to the English merchants on my route, that they might show me any civilities in their power. Taking ship at Nice, I arrived at Genoa, and afterwards visited Leghorn, Pisa, and Florence. In the latter city, which I have always more particularly esteemed for the elegance of its dialect, its genius, and its taste, I stopped about two months; when I contracted an intimacy with many persons of rank and learning, and was a constant attendant at their literary parties; a practice which prevails there, and tends so much to the diffusion of knowledge, and the preservation of friendship. No time will ever abolish the agreeable recollections which I cherish of Jacob Gaddi, Carolo Dati, Frescobaldo, Cultellero, Bonomatthai, Clementillo, Francisco, and many others. From Florence I went to Siena, thence to Rome, where, after I had spent about two months in viewing the antiquities of that renowned city, where I experienced the most friendly attentions from Lucas

Holstein, and other learned and ingenious men, I continued my route to Naples. There I was introduced by a certain recluse, with whom I had travelled from Rome, to John Baptista Manso, Marquis of Villa, a nobleman of distinguished rank and authority, to whom Torquato Tasso, the illustrious poet, inscribed his book on Friendship. During my stay he gave me singular proofs of his regard. He himself conducted me round the city, and to the palace of the viceroy; and, more than once, paid me a visit at my lodgings. On my departure he gravely apologised for not having shown me more civility, which he said he had been restrained from doing, because I had spoken with so little reserve on matters of religion. When I was preparing to pass over into Sicily and Greece, the melancholy intelligence which I received of the civil commotions in England made me alter my purpose; for I thought it base to be travelling for amusement abroad while my fellow-citizens were fighting for liberty at home. While I was on my way back to Rome, some merchants informed me that the English Jesuits had formed a plot against me if I returned to Rome, because I had spoken

too freely on religion; for it was a rule which I laid down to myself in those places, never to be the first to begin any conversation on religion; but, if any questions were put to me concerning my faith, to declare it without any reserve or fear. I nevertheless returned to Rome. I took no steps to conceal either my person or my character; and, for about the space of two months, I again openly defended, as I had done before, the Reformed religion in the very metropolis of Popery. By the favour of God I got safe back to Florence, where I was received with as much affection as if I had returned to my native country. There I stopped as many months as I had done, except that I made an excursion for a few days to Lucca; and, crossing the Apennines, passed through Bologna and Ferrara to Venice. After I had spent a month in surveying the curiosities of this city, and had put on board a ship the books which I had collected in Italy, I proceeded through Verona and Milan, and along the Leman Lake to Geneva. The mention of this city brings to my recollection the slandering More, and makes me again call the Deity to witness, that, in all those places in which

vice meets with so little discouragement, and is practised with so little shame, I never once deviated from the paths of integrity and virtue, and perpetually reflected that, though my conduct might escape the notice of men, it could not elude the inspection of God. At Geneva I held daily conferences with John Deodati, the learned professor of Theology. Then, pursuing my former route through France, I returned to my native country, after an absence of one year and about three months, at the time when Charles, having broken the peace, was renewing what is called the episcopal war with the Scots, in which the Royalists being routed in the first encounter, and the English being universally and justly disaffected, the necessity of his affairs at last obliged him to convene a parliament. As soon as I was able, I hired a spacious house in the city for myself and my books; where I again, with rapture, renewed my literary pursuits, and where I calmly awaited the issue of the contest, which I trusted to the wise conduct of Providence, and to the courage of the people. The vigour of the Parliament had begun to humble the pride of the bishops. As long as the liberty of speech was no

longer subject to control, all mouths began to be opened against the bishops. They said that it was unjust that they alone should differ from the model of other Reformed churches; that the government of the Church should be according to the pattern of other churches, and particularly the word of God. This awakened all my attention and my zeal. I saw that a way was opening for the establishment of real liberty; that the foundation was laying for the deliverance of man from the yoke of slavery and superstition; that the principles of religion, which were the first objects of our care, would exert a salutary influence on the manners and constitution of the republic. And as I had, from my youth, studied the distinctions between religious and civil rights, I perceived that, if ever I wished to be of use, I ought at least not to be wanting to my country, to the Church, and to so many of my fellow-Christians, in a crisis of so much danger. I, therefore, determined to relinquish the other pursuits in which I was engaged, and to transfer the whole force of my talents and my industry to this one important object. I accordingly wrote two books to a friend concerning

the Reformation of the Church of England. Afterwards, when two bishops of superior distinction vindicated their privileges against some principal ministers, I thought that on those topics, to the consideration of which I was led solely by my love of truth and my reverence for Christianity, I should not probably write worse than those who were contending only for their own emoluments and usurpations. I, therefore, answered the one in two books, of which the first is inscribed, "Concerning Prelatical Episcopacy;" and the other, "Concerning the Mode of Ecclesiastical Government;" and I replied to the other in some Animadversions, and soon after in an Apology. On this occasion it was supposed, that I brought a timely succour to the ministers, who were hardly a match for the eloquence of their opponents; and from that time I was actively employed in refuting any answers that appeared. When the bishops could no longer resist the multitude of their assailants, I had leisure to turn my thoughts to other subjects; to the promotion of real and substantial liberty, which is rather to be sought from within than from without; and whose existence depends, not so much on the terror of the

sword as on sobriety of conduct and integrity of life. When, therefore, I perceived that there were three species of liberty which are essential to the happiness of social life—religious, domestic, and civil—and as I had already written concerning the first, and the magistrates were strenuously active in obtaining the third, I determined to turn my attention to the second, or the domestic species. As they seemed to involve three material questions—the conditions of the conjugal tie, the education of the children, and the free publication of the thoughts—I made them objects of distinct consideration. I explained my sentiments, not only concerning the solemnization of matrimony, but the dissolution, if circumstances rendered it necessary; and I drew my arguments from the divine law, which Christ did not abolish, or publish another more grievous than that of Moses. I stated my own opinions, and those of others, concerning the exclusive exception of fornication, which our illustrious Selden has since, in his "Hebrew Wife," more copiously discussed; for he, in vain, makes a vaunt of liberty in the senate or in the forum, who languishes under the vilest ser-

vitude, to an inferior at home. On this subject, therefore, I published some books, which were more particularly necessary at that time; when man and wife were often the most inveterate foes; when the man often staid to take care of his children at home, while the mother of the family was seen in the camp of the enemy, threatening death and destruction to her husband. I then discussed the principles of education in a summary manner, but sufficiently copious for those who attend seriously to the subject; than which nothing can be more necessary to principle the minds of men in virtue, the only genuine source of political and individual liberty, the only true safeguard of states, the bulwark of their prosperity and renown. Lastly, I wrote my "Areopagitica" after the true Attic style, in order to deliver the press from the restraints with which it was encumbered; that the power of determining what was true and what was false, what ought to be published and what to be suppressed, might no longer be entrusted to a few illiterate and illiberal individuals, who refused their sanction to any work which contained views

or sentiments at all above the level of the vulgar.[1] (Postremo de Typographiâ liberandâ, ne veri et falsi arbitrium, quid edendum, quid premendum, penes paucos esset, eosque fere indoctos, et vulgaris judicii homines, librorum inspectioni præpositos, per quos nemini fere quicquam quod supra vulgus sapiat, in lucem emittere, aut licet aut libet, *ad justæ orationis modum Areopagiticum scripsi.*)'[2]

[1] *The Second Defence*, vol. i. pp. 255–259. Having thus given the sketch of this period of his life in his own words, according to my usual plan, from *The Second Defence*, I shall proceed to fill up the outline with autobiographical passages from his correspondence and other prose works. The marvel is, the abundance of material that crops up here and elsewhere on all sides, as if he had designed to supply the means of constructing such a work as that in which I am now engaged, though more than two hundred years have passed without anyone making the attempt. There is not throughout his works the slightest hint that he entertained any such wish or intention. We are surprised that he never did this himself, as so many have done, or wrote a book like Goethe's *Autobiography, Truth, and Poetry, from my own Life.* Circumstances, over which he had no control, caused him to speak so much of himself, and he was satisfied, though always desirous of setting himself right with posterity. All is natural, simple, and transparent; as, with a mind formed like his, was sure to be the case. The consequence is, how very much we know, or might know, from an attentive perusal of his works, about Milton and all his belongings; while the life of Chaucer, Spenser, or Shakespeare, is meagre in the extreme, and confined to a few facts, that of Milton is full, circumstantial, almost perfect, and above all authentic and true.

[2] He intended 'to exhibit in an English dress a true specimen of

'I, certainly, who have not wet merely the tips of my lips with both these tongues (Greek and Latin), but have, as much as any, to the full allowance of my years, drained their deeper draughts, can yet sometimes willingly and eagerly go for a feast to that Dante of yours, and to Petrarch, and a good few more. Nor has the Attic Athens itself, with its pellucid Ilissus, nor that old Rome, with its banks of the Tiber, been able so to hold me, but that I love often to visit your Arno, and these hills of Fæsule. See now, I entreat, whether the reason has been sufficient that has given me to you for these few days, your latest guest from the ocean, and so great a lover of your nation that, as I think, there is no other more so.'[1]

'Although I both can, and often do, remember many courteous and most friendly acts which I have experienced at the hands of many in this my passage through Italy; yet, for so brief an acquaint-

the Areopagitic style, transfusing into his native idiom the dignified forms and phraseology of Attic oratory, which he here imitates, or rather emulates, and has given us the most authentic and happy exemplar of its grave energy that our own or any modern language has to boast.'—*Holt White.*

[1] Letter VIII. To Benedetto Roumattei, of Florence, 1638. (Masson.)

ance, I do not know that I can justly say that from anyone I have had greater proofs of goodwill than those which have come to me from you. For, when I went up to the Vatican for the purpose of meeting you, you received me, a total stranger to you (unless, perchance, anything had been previously said about me to you by Alexander Cherubini), with the utmost courtesy. Immediately admitted with politeness into the Museum, I was allowed to behold both the superb collection of books, and also very many manuscript Greek authors, set forth with your explanations; some of whom, not yet seen in our age, seemed now in their array, like those in Maro,

> penitus convalle virenti
> Inclusæ animæ, superûmque ad limen ituræ,

to demand the active hands of the printer, and a delivery into the world; others of whom, already edited by your care, are eagerly received everywhere by scholars; I myself, too, being dismissed by you, richer than I came, with two copies of one which you presented to me. Then I could not but believe, that it was in consequence of the mention

you made of me to the most excellent Cardinal Francesco Barberini, that when he, a few days after, gave that public musical entertainment with truly Roman magnificence, he himself, waiting at the doors, and seeking me out in so great a crowd, nay, almost laying hold of me by the hand, admitted me within in a truly most honourable manner. And when, on this account, I went to pay my respects to him the next day, you again were the person who both made access for me, and obtained for me an opportunity of conversing with him at leisure.'[1]

'I, a foreign youth, sent hither from the polar north, wish thee, my father Mansus, a long age of health, in the name of Clio and of great Phœbus. Nor wilt thou, in thy goodness, scorn the far-off Muse, which, lately nourished scarce to maturity under the Arctic cold, has dared indiscreetly to fly through the Italian cities. We, also, believe ourselves to have heard, through the obscure shades of night, the swans singing in that stream of ours, where Thames bathes with its tide the blue hairs of Ocean. Moreover, our Tityrus himself (Chaucer,

[1] Letter IX. To Luke Holstein, in the Vatican at Rome, 1639.

so called in Spenser) came of yore into these very lands of yours. . . . O that my lot might yield me such a friend! one who should know as well how to decorate Apollo's children, if, perchance, I shall ever call back into verse our native kings,[1] and Arthur stirring wars even under the earth that hides him; or speak of the great-souled heroes, the Knights of the unconquered Table, bound in confederate brotherhood, and (O, may the spirit be present to me!) break the Saxon phalanxes under the British Mars. Then, when, having measured out the period of a not silent life, and full of years, I shall leave the dust its due, he would stand by my bed with wet eyes; he would see that my limbs were softly laid in the narrow coffin; perchance he would bring out from the marble our features, wreathing the hair either with the leaf of Paphian myrtle, or with that of Parnassian laurel; but I shall repose in secure peace.'[2]

'Diodati (and I tell it thee with wonder), stubborn I, who used to scorn Love, and often laugh

[1] He here alludes to his long-cherished intention of writing an epic poem on the subject of Arthur.

[2] *Sylvarum Liber. Mansus.*

at his snares, have fallen at length where sometimes an honest man finds himself entangled. It is not tresses of gold, nor cheeks of vermeil tincture, that dazzle me so, but the new type of a foreign beauty which blesses my heart—carriage high and honourable; in the eyebrows the serene splendour of a lovely black; speech graced with languages more than one; and a song[1] which might lure from her middle hemisphere the labouring moon; while still from the eyes shoots such a fire that, should I close my ears, it would avail me little.

'Young, gentle, loving simply—since I am in doubt to fly from myself to thee, lady—let me offer devoutly the humble gift of my heart. I know it certainly, by many proofs, to be faithful, intrepid, constant; in its conceptions graceful, wise, and good. When the great world roars, and the thunder strikes, it arms itself with itself, and with solid adamant, as secure from doubt and envy, and from vulgar fears and hopes, as it is loving of genius and high work, of the sounding harp and

[1] This lady was not the singing Leonora, to whom he addressed three epigrams.

of the Muses. In that part alone will you find it less hard where Love has planted his cureless sting.'[1]

'Thyrsis and Damon,' i.e. Milton and Diodati—he gives the name of Thyrsis also to the attendant Spirit in 'Comus'—'shepherds and neighbours, had always pursued the same studies, and had, from their earliest days, been united in the closest friendship. Thyrsis, while travelling for improvement, received intelligence of the death of Damon; and, after a time, returning and finding it true, deplores himself and his solitary condition in this poem. By Damon is to be understood Charles Diodati, connected with the Italian city of Lucca by his father's side, in other respects an Englishman; a youth of uncommon genius, erudition, and virtue.'[2]

'The sweet love of the Muse was detaining

[1] *Italian Sonnets*, III. and V. 'These pieces are a series relating to one foreign lady, a Bolognese, and telling the same story. The attachment is so strong that he seems to feel flight necessary. The fifth is in the most serious strain, and is a fine and proud definition by Milton of his own character.'—Masson's *Life*, 774. This 'graciously haughty' beauty is the imaginary heroine of Lord Lytton's poem of *Milton*. See my *Selections from Milton's Prose*, 333, Appendix.

[2] *The Argument to Epitaphium Damonis.*

that shepherd' (Milton was then at Florence) 'in the Tuscan city; but when his mind was stored, and the care of his abandoned flock summons him home, as soon as he sits under the accustomed elm, then he feels the greatness of his loss, and begins to give vent to his immense grief. . . . Twelve evenings since I was meditating some stately theme[1] on my willing pipe; and, though I may appear vain, I will tell you what it was. I will sing of the landing of the Trojans on the Kentish coast (Rhutupium) under Brutus; and the ancient kingdom of Imogen, daughter of Pandrasus; and the leaders Brennus and Arviragus, and ancient Belinus, and Armorica (Britany in France) peopled by the Britons when they fled from the Saxons. Then I will sing of Iogerne, the wife of Gorlois, who bore Arthur, deceived by the artifice of Merlin, who had transformed Uther Pendragon into the likeness of Gorlois. And O! if I should have long life to execute these designs, you, my rural pipe, shall be hung up forgotten on yonder ancient pine: you are now employed in Latin strains, but

[1] He alludes to his design of writing an epic poem on some subject taken from the ancient history of Britain.

you shall soon be exchanged for English poetry. Will you then sound in rude British tones? Yes, we cannot excel in all things. I shall be sufficiently contented to be celebrated at home for English verse. These, and suchlike themes, I was intending to communicate to you, and to show you the two cups, wonderful products of art, which Mansus, the glory of Naples, gave me.' [1]

'For me, I have determined to lay up—as the best treasure and solace of a good old age, if God vouchsafe it me—the honest liberty of free speech from my youth, where I shall think it available in so dear a concernment as the Church's good. For if I be, either by disposition, or what other cause, too inquisitive, or supicious of myself and mine own doings, who can help it? But this I foresee, that should the Church be brought under heavy oppression, and God have given me ability the while to reason against that man that should be the author of so foul a deed; or should she, by blessing from above on the industry and courage of faithful men, change this her distracted estate into better days, without the least furtherance or

[1] *Epitaphium Damonis.*

contribution of those few talents, which God at that present had lent me ; I foresee what stories I should hear within myself, all my life after, of discourage and reproach. Timorous and ungrateful, the Church of God is now again at the foot of her insulting enemies, and *thou* bewailest. What matters it for thee, or thy bewailing? When time was, thou couldst not find a syllable of all that thou has read, or studied, to utter in her behalf. Yet ease and leisure was given thee for thy retired thoughts, out of the sweat of other men.[1] Thou hast the diligence, the parts, the language of a man, if a vain subject were to be adorned or beautified;[2] but when the cause of God and His Church was to be pleaded, for which purpose that tongue was given thee which thou hast, God listened if He could hear thy voice among His zealous servants, but thou wert dumb as a beast. From henceforward be that which thine own brutish silence hath made thee. Or else I should have heard on the other ear: Slothful, and ever to be set light by, the Church hath now overcome her late dis-

[1] Allusion to his father.

[2] Probably he alludes to *The Masque of Comus.*

tresses, after the unwearied labours of many her true servants that stood up in her defence; *thou* also wouldst take upon thee to share amongst them of their joy: but wherefore *thou?* Where canst thou show any word or deed of thine which might have hastened her peace? Whatever thou dost now talk, or write, or look, is the alms of other men's active prudence and zeal. Dare not now to say, or do, anything better than thy former sloth and infancy; or if thou darest, thou dost impudently to make a thrifty purchase of boldness to thyself, out of the painful merits of other men; what before was thy sin, is now thy duty, to be abject and worthless. These, and suchlike lessons as these, I know, would have been my matins duly, and my evensong. But now, by this little diligence, mark what a privilege I have gained with good men and saints, to claim my right of lamenting the tribulations of the Church, if she should suffer, when others that have ventured nothing for her sake have not the honour to be admitted mourners. But if she lift up her drooping head and prosper, among those that have something more than wished her welfare, I have my charter and freehold of re-

joicing to me and my heirs. Concerning, therefore, this wayward subject against prelaty, the touching whereof is so distasteful and disquietous to a number of men, as by what hath been said I may deserve of charitable readers to be credited, that neither envy nor gall hath entered me upon this controversy, but the enforcement of conscience only, and a preventive fear lest the omitting of this duty should be against me, when I would store up to myself the good provision of peaceful hours; so, lest it should still be imputed to me, as I have found it hath been, that some self-pleasing humour of vainglory hath incited me to contest with men of high estimation, now, while green years are upon my head; from this needless surmisal I shall hope to dissuade the intelligent and equal[1] auditor, if I can but say successfully that which in this exigent behoves me; although I would be heard only, if it might be, by the elegant and learned reader, to whom principally, for a while, I shall beg leave I may address myself. To him it will be no new thing, though I tell him, that if I hunted after praise, by the ostentation of wit and learning, I

[1] The Latin *æqualis*, equitable, just.

should not write thus out of mine own season, when I have neither yet completed to my mind the full circle of my private studies, although I complain not of any insufficiency to the matter in hand; or, were I ready to my wishes, it were a folly to commit anything elaborately composed to the careless and interrupted listening of these tumultuous times. Next; if I were wise only to mine own ends, I would certainly take such a subject as of itself might catch applause, whereas this hath all the disadvantages, on the contrary; and such a subject as the publishing whereof might be delayed at pleasure, and time enough to pencil it over with all the curious touches of art, even to the perfection of a faultless picture; whereas, in this argument, the not deferring is of great moment to the good speeding, that if solidity hath leisure to do her office, art cannot have much. Lastly, I should not choose this manner of writing, wherein, knowing myself inferior to myself, led by the genial power of nature to another task, I have the use, as I may account, but of my left hand. And, though I shall be foolish in saying more to this purpose, yet, since it will be such a folly as wisest

men go about to commit, having only confessed and so committed, I may trust with more reason, because with more folly, to have courteous pardon. For although a poet, soaring in the high reason of his fancies, with his garland and singing robes about him, might, without apology, speak more of himself than I mean to do; yet for me, sitting here below in the cool element of prose, a mortal thing among many readers of no empyreal conceit, to venture and divulge unusual things of myself, I shall petition to the gentler sort it may not be envy to me. . . . But much latelier, in the private academies of Italy, whither I was favoured to resort, perceiving that some trifles which I had in memory,[1] composed at under twenty or thereabout (for the manner is, that everyone must give some proof of his wit and reading there), met with acceptance above what was looked for; and other things, which I had shifted in scarcity of books and conveniences to patch up amongst them, were received with written encomiums,[2] which the Italian

[1] Some of his Latin poems, such as, *In Adventum Veris*, or, *Naturam non pati Senium*, or, *De Ideâ Platonicâ*; or, perhaps, some of his Prolusions, such as the second, *De Spherarum Concentu*.

[2] From Salsillus and Selvaggi.

is not forward to bestow on men of this side the Alps; I began, thus far, to assent both to them and divers of my friends here at home, and not less to an inward prompting which now grew daily upon me, that, by labour and intense study (which I take to be my position in this life), joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might, perhaps, leave something so written to after-times as they should not willingly let it die. These thoughts at once possessed me, and these other: that if I were certain to write as men buy leases, for three lives and downward, there ought no regard be sooner had than to God's glory, by the honour and instruction of my country. For which cause, and not only for that I knew it would be hard to arrive at the second rank among the Latins, I applied myself to that resolution which Ariosto followed against the persuasions of Bembo—to fix all the industry and art I could unite to the adorning of my native tongue; not to make verbal curiosities the end (that were a toilsome vanity), but to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among mine own citizens throughout this island in the mother dialect. That what the greatest and choicest wits of Athens,

Rome, or modern Italy, and those Hebrews of old did for their country, I, in my proportion, with this over and above of being a Christian, might do for mine; not caring to be once named abroad, though perhaps I could attain to that, but content with these British Islands as my world; whose fortune hath hitherto been, that if the Athenians, as some say, made their small deeds great and renowned by their eloquent writers, England hath had her noble achievements made small by the unskilful handling of monks and mechanics.

'Time serves not now, and perhaps I might seem too profuse to give any certain account of what the mind at home, in the spacious circuits of her musing, hath liberty to propose to herself, though of highest hope and hardest attempting; whether that epic form, whereof the two poems of Homer, and those other two of Virgil and Tasso, are a diffuse, and the Book of Job a brief, model; or whether the rules of Aristotle herein are strictly to be kept, or nature to be followed, which in them that know art, and use judgment, is no transgression, but an enriching of art; and lastly, what king or knight, before the conquest, might be chosen, in

whom to lay the pattern of a Christian hero. And as Tasso gave to a prince of Italy his choice, whether he would command him to write of Godfrey's expedition against the Infidels, or Belisarius against the Goths, or Charlemain against the Lombards; if to the instinct of nature and the emboldening of art aught may be trusted, and that there be nothing adverse in our climate, or the fate of this age, it haply would be no rashness, from an equal diligence and inclination, to present the like offer in our own ancient stories; or whether those dramatic constitutions, wherein Sophocles and Euripides reign, shall be found more doctrinal and exemplary to a nation. The Scripture also affords us a divine pastoral drama in the Song of Solomon, consisting of two persons and a double chorus, as Origen rightly judges. And the Apocalypse of St. John is the majestic image of a high and stately tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn scenes and acts with a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies: and this my opinion the grave authority of Pareus, commenting that book, is sufficient to confirm. Or if occasion shall lead, to imitate those magnific odes and

hymns, wherein Pindarus and Callimachus are in most things worthy, some others in their frame judicious, in their matter most an end[1] faulty. But those frequent songs throughout the law and prophets beyond all these, not in their divine argument alone, but in the very critical art of composition, may be easily made appear over all the kinds of lyric poetry to be incomparable. These abilities, wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God, rarely bestowed, but yet to some (though most abuse), in every nation; and are of power, beside the office of a pulpit, to imbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility,[2] to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune; to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage

[1] *I.e.* in general, for the most part.

[2] 'The tendency which there is in the meaning of words to run to the surface, till they lose and leave behind all their deeper significance, is well exemplified in the words *civil* and *civility*—words of how deep an import once, how slight and shallow now. A *civil* man now is one observant of slight external courtesies in the mutual intercourse between man and man; a *civil* man once was one who fulfilled all the duties and obligations flowing from his position as a "civis," and his relations to the other members of that "civitas" to which he belonged; and *civility* the condition in which those were recognized and observed.'—Trench's *Select Glossary*.

of God's almightiness, and what He works, and what He suffers to be wrought with high providence in His Church; to sing victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations, doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ; to deplore the general relapses of kingdoms and states from justice and God's true worship. Lastly, whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or grave, whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subtleties and refluxes of man's thoughts from within; all these things with a solid and treatable smoothness to paint out and describe; teaching over the whole book of sanctity and virtue, through all the instances of example, with such delight to those especially of soft and delicious temper, who will not so much as look upon truth herself, unless they see her elegantly dressed; that whereas the paths of honesty and good life appear now rugged and difficult, though they be indeed easy and pleasant, they will then appear to all men both easy and pleasant, though they were rugged and difficult

indeed. . . . The thing which I had to say, and those intentions which have lived within me ever since I could conceive myself anything worth to my country, I return to crave excuse that urgent reason hath plucked from me, by an abortive and foredated discovery. And the accomplishment of them lies not but in a power above man's to promise; but that none hath by more studious ways endeavoured, and with more unwearied spirit that none shall, that I dare almost aver of myself, as far as life and free leisure will extend; and that the land had once enfranchised herself from this impertinent yoke of prelaty, under whose inquisitorious and tyrannical duncery, no free and splendid wit can flourish. Neither do I think it shame to covenant with any knowing reader, that for some few years yet I may go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth, or the vapours of wine; like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amourist, or the trencher fury of a rhyming parasite; nor to be obtained by the invocation of dame memory and her siren daughters, but by devout

prayer to that Eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His seraphim, with the hallowed fire of His altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases: To this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs: till which in some measure be compassed, at my own peril and cost, I refuse not to sustain this expectation from as many as are not loth to hazard so much credulity upon the best pledges that I can give them. Although it nothing content me to have disclosed thus much beforehand, but that I trust hereby to make it manifest with what small willingness I endure to interrupt the pursuit of no less hopes than these, and leave a calm and pleasing solitariness, fed with cheerful and confident thoughts, to embark in a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes, put from beholding the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies, to come into the dim reflection of hollow antiquities sold by the seeming bulk, and there be fain to club quotations with men whose learning and belief lies in marginal stuffings, who, when they

have, like good sumpters, laid ye down their horse-loads of citations and fathers at your door, with a rhapsody of who and who were bishops here or there, ye may take off their pack-saddles, their day's work is done, and episcopacy, as they think, stoutly vindicated. Let any gentle apprehension, that can distinguish learned pains from unlearned drudgery imagine what pleasure or profoundness can be in this, or what honour to deal against such adversaries. But were it the meanest under-service, if God by His secretary Conscience enjoin it, it were sad for me if I should draw back; for me especially, now when all men offer their aid to help, ease, and lighten the difficult labours of the Church, to whose service, by the intention of my parents and friends, I was destined of a child, and in mine own resolutions.'[1]

'When Thou hast settled peace in the Church, and righteous judgment in the kingdom,' then shall all thy saints address their voices of joy and triumph to Thee, standing on the shore of that Red Sea into which our enemies had almost driven

[1] *The Reason of Church Government*, vol. ii. p. 475–482.

us. And he that now for haste snatches up a plain ungarnished present as a thank-offering to Thee, which could not be deferred in regard of Thy so many late deliverances wrought for us one upon another, may then perhaps take up a harp, and sing Thee an elaborate song to generations. In that day it shall no more be said as in scorn, this or that was never held so till this present age, when men have better learnt that the times and seasons pass along under Thy feet to go and come at Thy bidding: and as Thou didst dignify our fathers' days with many revelations above all the foregoing ages, since Thou tookest the flesh; so Thou canst vouchsafe to us (though unworthy) as large a portion of Thy Spirit as Thou pleasest: for who shall prejudice Thy all-governing will; seeing the power of Thy grace is not passed away with the primitive times, as fond and faithless men imagine, but Thy kingdom is now at hand, and Thou standing at the door. Come forth out of Thy royal chambers, O Prince of all the kings of the earth! put on the visible robes of Thy imperial majesty; take up that unlimited sceptre which Thy Almighty Father hath

bequeathed Thee; for now the voice of Thy Bride calls Thee, and all creatures sigh to be renewed.'[1]

'Then, amidst the hymns and hallelujahs of saints, some one may perhaps be heard offering at high strains, in new and lofty measure, to sing and celebrate Thy divine mercies and marvellous judgments in this land throughout all ages: when Thou, the eternal and shortly expected King, shalt open the clouds to judge the several kingdoms of the world, and shalt put an end to all earthly tyrannies, proclaiming Thy universal and mild monarchy through heaven and earth; where they undoubtedly, that by their labours, counsels, and prayers, have been earnest for the common good of religion and their country, shall clasp inseparable hands with joy and bliss, in overmeasure for ever.'[2]

'I resolved (of what small moment soever I might be thought) to stand on that side where I

[1] *Animadversions upon the Remonstrant*, vol. iii. p. 72. The value of this autobiographical passage consists in its containing a prophetic anticipation of the *Paradise Lost*, of the millennial reign of Christ on earth, and his own destiny to receive on that august occasion, 'above the inferior orders of the blessed,' some super-eminent honour and reward. The same value attaches to the next passage, which is taken from the *Treatise of Reformation*.

[2] *Of Reformation in England*, vol. ii. p. 418.

saw both the plain authority of Scripture leading, and the reason of justice and equity persuading, and defend a good cause earnestly. Wherein although I have not doubted to single forth more than once such of them as were thought the chief; if I have done well, or that it be lawful to attribute somewhat to gifts of God's imparting, which I boast not, but thankfully acknowledge, and fear also lest, at my certain account, they be reckoned to me rather many than few; or if lastly it be but justice not to defraud of due esteem the wearisome labours and studious watchings, wherein I have spent and tired out almost a whole youth, I shall not distrust to be acquitted of presumption. However, now against the rancour of an evil tongue, from which I never thought so absurdly, as that I of all men should be exempt, I must be forced to proceed from the unfeigned and diligent inquiry of my own conscience at home (for better way I know not, readers), to give a more true account of myself abroad, than this modest Confuter, as he calls himself, hath given of me. Albeit, that in doing this I shall be sensible of two things which to me will be nothing pleasant; the one is, that not

unlikely I shall be thought too much a party in mine own cause, and therein to see least; the other, that I shall be put unwillingly to molest the public view with the vindication of a private name; as if it were worth the while that the people should care whether such a one were thus, or thus. Yet those I entreat who have found the leisure to read that name, however of small repute, unworthily defamed, would be so good and so patient as to hear the same person not unneedfully defended.

'I will not deny but that the best apology against false accusers is silence and sufferance, and honest deeds set against dishonest words. And that I could at this time most easily and securely use no other defence, I need not despair to win belief; whether I consider both the foolish contriving and ridiculous aiming of these his slanderous bolts, shot so wide of any suspicion to be fastened on me, that I have oft with inward contentment perceived my friends congratulating themselves in my innocence, and my enemies ashamed of their partner's folly; or whether I look at these present times, wherein most men, now scarce permitted the liberty to think over their own concernments,

have removed the seat of their thoughts more outward to the expectation of public events; or whether the examples of men, either noble or religious, who have sat down lately with a meek silence and sufferance under many libellous endorsements, may be a rule to others, I might well appease myself to put up any reproaches in such an honourable society of fellow-sufferers, using no other defence.

'And were it that slander would be content to make an end where it first fixes, and not seek to cast out the like infamy upon each thing that hath but any relation to the person traduced, I should have pleaded against this Confuter by no other advocates than those which I first commended, silence and sufferance, and speaking deeds against faltering words. But when I discerned his intent was not so much to smite at me, as through me to render odious the truth which I had written, and to stain with ignominy that evangelic doctrine which opposes the tradition of prelacy, I conceived myself to be now not as mine own person, but as a member incorporate into that truth whereof I was persuaded, and whereof I had declared openly to

be a partaker. Whereupon I thought it my duty, if not to myself, yet to the religious cause I had in hand, not to leave on my garment the least spot or blemish in good name, so long as God should give me to say that which might wipe it off; lest those disgraces which I ought to suffer, if it so befall me, for my religion, through my default religion be made liable to suffer for me. . . . And against such kind of deceivers openly and earnestly to protest, lest anyone should be inquisitive wherefore this or that man is forwarder than others, let him know that this office goes not by age or youth, but to whomsoever God shall give apparently the will, the spirit, and the utterance.' . . . (Here follow those long extracts which we have given at page 3 and 32, referring to his early education and especially vindicating his private character during his University career.)

'But he proceeds, and the familiar belike informs him, that "a rich widow, or a lecture, or both, would content me;" whereby I perceive him to be more ignorant in his art of divining than any gipsy. For this I cannot omit without ingratitude to that Providence above, Who hath ever bred me up in

plenty, although my life hath not been unexpensive in learning, and voyaging about; so long as it shall please Him to lend me what He hath hitherto thought good, which is enough to serve me in all honest and liberal occasions, and something over besides, I were unthankful to that highest bounty, if I should make myself so poor as to solicit readily any such kind of rich hopes as this fortune-teller dreams of. And that he may further learn how his astrology is wide all the houses of heaven in spelling marriages, I care not if I tell him thus much professedly, though it be the losing of my rich hopes, as he calls them, that I think with them who, both in prudence and elegance of spirit, would choose a virgin of mean fortunes, honestly bred, before the wealthiest widow.[1] The fiend, therefore, that told our Chaldean the contrary, was a lying fiend.'

To the charge of being 'unread in the Councils,' he answers, 'Some years I had spent in the stories

[1] Milton's three wives were virgins. But since his 'marriage-choices,' with perhaps the exception of the second, were such as we can neither 'approve' nor 'praise,' his opinion on this subject will only go for what it is worth. The next year after writing this, he married Mary Powell, abandoning 'his rich hopes, his Maronilla.'

of those Greek and Roman exploits, wherein I found many things both nobly done, and worthily spoken: when, coming in the method of time to that age wherein the Church had obtained a Christian emperor, I so prepared myself, as being now to read examples of wisdom and goodness among those who were foremost in the Church, not elsewhere to be paralleled; but to the amazement of what I expected I found it all quite contrary; excepting in some very few, nothing but ambition, corruption, contention, combustion; insomuch that I could not but love the historian, Socrates, who, in his poem to his fifth book, professes, "he was fain to intermix affairs of state, for that it would be else an extreme annoyance to hear, in a continued discourse, the endless brabbles and counterplottings of the bishops." I have not, therefore, I confess, read more of the councils, save here and there. I should have been sorry to have been such a prodigal of my time; but, that which is better, I can assure this Confuter, I have read into them all. And if I want anything yet I shall reply something toward that which in the defence of Murena was answered by Cicero to Sulpitius the lawyer. If

ye provoke me (for at no hand will I undertake such a frivolous labour), I will in three months be an expert councilist. (Itaque, si mihi, homini vehementer occupato, stomachum moveritis, triduo me jurisconsultum esse profitebor, c. xiii. § 28.) For do but winnow their chaff from their wheat, ye shall see their great heap shrink and wax thin, past belief.

'But I that was erewhile the ignorant, the loiterer, on the sudden, by his permission, am now granted "to know something;" and that "such a volley of expressions" he hath met withal, "as he would never desire to have them better clothed." For me, readers, although I cannot say that I am utterly untrained in those rules which best rhetoricians have given, or unacquainted with those examples which the prime authors of eloquence have written in any learned tongue; yet true eloquence I find to be none, but the serious and hearty love of truth; and that whose mind soever is fully possessed with a fervent desire to know good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others, when such a man would speak, his words, like so many nimble and airy

servitors, trip about him at command, and in well-ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places.'[1]

'I could recount what I have seen and heard in other countries, where this kind of inquisition tyrannizes,[2] when I have sat among their learned men (for that honour I had), and been counted happy to be born in such a place of philosophic freedom, as they supposed England was, while themselves did nothing but bemoan the servile condition into which learning amongst them was brought; that this was it which had damped the glory of Italian wits; that nothing had been there written now these many years but flattery and fustian. There it was that I found and visited the famous Galileo, grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition, for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licensers thought.'[3]

'I am long since persuaded that to say or do aught worth memory and imitation, no purpose or respect should sooner move us than simply the

[1] 'Apology for Smectymnuus,' *Works*, vol. iii. p. 95, &c.
[2] He is here deprecating the censorship of the press.
[3] 'Areopagitica,' *Works*, vol. ii. p. 82.

love of God and of mankind. I will forthwith set down in writing, as you request me, that voluntary idea, which hath long, in silence, presented itself to me, of a better education, in extent and comprehension far more large, and yet of time far shorter, and of attainment far more certain, than hath been yet in practice. To tell you what I have benefited herein among old renowned authors, I shall spare. But if you can accept of these few observations which have flowered off, and are, as it were, the burnishing of many studious and contemplative years, altogether spent in the search of religious and civil knowledge, and such as pleased you so well in the relating, I here give you them to dispose of.' [1]

'Me it concerns next (i.e. this matter of the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce), having with much labour and faithful diligence first found out, or at least, with a fearless and communicative candour, first published, to the manifest good of Christendom, that which calling to witness every thing mortal and immortal, I believe unfeignedly to be true. I seek not to seduce the simple and illiterate;

[1] 'On Education,' *Works*, vol. iii. p. 462.

my errand is to find out the choicest and the learnedest, who have this high gift of wisdom to answer solidly or to be convinced. I crave it from the piety, the learning, and the prudence, which is housed in this place. It might, perhaps, more fitly have been written in another tongue; and I had done so, but that the esteem I have of my country's judgment, and the love I bear to my native language, to serve it first with what I endeavour, make me speak it thus, ere I assay the verdict of outlandish readers.

'But some are ready to object that the disposition ought seriously to be considered before.[1] But let them know again that, for all the wariness can be used, it may yet befall a discreet man to be mistaken in his choice; and we have plenty of examples. The soberest and best governed men are least practised in these affairs; and who knows not that the bashful muteness of a virgin may

[1] In this and various other passages throughout this *Treatise of Divorce*, Milton is speaking feelingly, and is evidently alluding to his wife Mary Powell and her obstinate desertion of him, a few weeks after their marriage, for a period of more than two years. Bearing this in mind, we can hardly be wrong in regarding much that he here writes as eminently and essentially autobiographical.

ofttimes hide all the unliveliness and natural sloth which is really unfit for conversation? Nor is there that freedom of access granted or presumed, as may suffice to a perfect discerning, till too late; and where any indisposition is suspected, what more usual than the persuasion of friends that acquaintance, as it increases, will amend all? . . . The sober man, honouring the appearance of modesty, may easily chance to meet with a mind to all due conversation inaccessible, and to all the more estimable and superior purposes of matrimony useless and almost lifeless; and what a solace, what a fit help, such a consort would be through the whole life of a man, is less pain to conjecture than to have experience.

'Although God in the first ordaining of marriage taught us to what end He did it, in words expressly implying the apt and cheerful conversation of man with woman, to comfort and refresh him against the evil of solitary life, yet now, if any two be but once banded in the Church, let them find themselves never so mistaken in their dispositions through any error, concealment, or misadventure, that through their different tempers, thoughts, and

constitutions, they can neither be to one another a remedy against loneliness, nor live in any union or contentment all their days, yet they shall be made, spite of antipathy, to fadge together, and combine as they may to their unspeakable wearisomeness, and despair of all sociable delight in the ordinance which God established to that very end. What a calamity is this! and as the wise man, if he were alive, would sigh out in his own phrase, what a "sore evil is this under the sun"!

'This position shall be laid down, that indisposition, unfitness, or contrariety of mind, arising from a cause in nature unchangeable, hindering, and ever likely to hinder, the main benefits of conjugal society, is a greater reason of divorce than natural frigidity, especially if there be no children, and that there be mutual consent.

'There follows upon this a worse temptation; for if he be such as hath spent his youth unblamably, and laid up his chiefest earthly comforts in the enjoyments of a contented marriage, nor did neglect that furtherance which was to be obtained therein by constant prayers; when he shall find himself bound fast to an uncomplying discord of

nature, or, as it oft happens, to an image of earth and phlegm, with whom he looked to be the co-partner of a sweet and gladsome society, and sees withal that his bondage is now inevitable; though he be almost the strongest Christian, he will be ready to despair in virtue, and mutiny against Divine Providence: and this doubtless is the reason of those lapses, and that melancholy despair, which we see in many wedded persons, though they understand it not, or pretend other causes, because they know no remedy.

'What an injury is it after wedlock not to be beloved! what to be slighted! what to be contended with, in point of house-rule, who shall be the head; not for any parity of reason, for that were something reasonable, but out of a female pride! "I suffer not," saith St. Paul, "the woman to usurp authority over the man." If the Apostle could not suffer it, into what mould is he mortified that can?

'As no man apprehends what vice is so well as he who is truly virtuous, no man knows hell like him who converses most in heaven; so there is none that can estimate the evil and the affliction

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of a natural hatred in matrimony, unless he have a soul gentle enough and spacious enough to contemplate what is true love—to apprehend what true concord means.'[1]

'Certainly if it be in man's discerning to sever Providence from chance, I could allege many instances wherein there would appear cause to esteem of me no other than a passive instrument under some power and counsel higher and better than can be human, working to a general good in the whole course of this matter. For that I owe no light or leading received from any man in the discovery of this truth, what time I first undertook it, in the "Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce," and had only the infallible grounds of Scripture to be my guide, He who tries the inmost heart, and saw with what severe industry and examination of myself I set down every period, will be my witness. When I had almost finished the first edition, I chanced to read in the notes of Hugo Grotius upon the fifth of Matthew, whom I straight understood inclining to reasonable terms in this controversy; and something he whispered rather than disputed

[1] 'The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,' *Works*, vol. iii.

about the law of charity, and the true end of wedlock. Glad, therefore, of such an able assistant, however at much distance, I resolved, at length, to put off into this wild and calumnious world. For God, it seems, intended to prove me, whether I durst alone take up a rightful cause against a world of disesteem, and found I durst. My name I did not publish, as not willing it should sway the reader either for me or against me. But when I was told that the style (which what it ails to be so soon distinguishable, I cannot tell) was known by most men, and that some of the clergy began to inveigh and exclaim on what, I was credibly informed, they had not read, I took it then for my proper season both to show them a name that could easily contemn such an indiscreet kind of censure, and to reinforce the question with a more accurate diligence. And, having now perfected a second edition, I referred the judging thereof to your high and impartial sentence, honoured Lords and Commons! . . When the book had been now the second time set forth well-nigh three months, I then first came to hear that Martin Bucer had written much concerning divorce; whom, earnestly

turning over, I soon perceived, but not without amazement, in the same opinion, confirmed with the same reasons which, in that published book, without the help or imitation of any precedent writer, I had laboured out and laid together. Not but that there is some difference in the handling, in the order, and the number of arguments, but still agreeing in the same conclusion. So, as I may justly gratulate my own mind with due acknowledgment of assistance from above, which led me, not as a learner, but as a collateral teacher, to a sympathy of judgment with no less a man than Martin Bucer. . . . This is another fault which I must tell them, that they have stood now almost this whole year clamouring afar off, while the book hath been twice printed, twice brought up, and never once vouchsafed a friendly conference with the author; who would be glad and thankful to be shown an error, either by private dispute or public answer, and could retract, as well as wise men before him; might also be worth the gaining, as one who heretofore hath done good service to the Church by their own confession. Or, if he be obstinate, their confutation would have

rendered him without excuse, and reclaimed others of no mean parts who incline to his opinion.

Thus far Martin Bucer; whom, where I might, without injury to either part of the cause, I deny not to have epitomised; in the rest observing a well-warranted rule, not to give an inventory of so many words but to weigh their force. I could have added that eloquent and right Christian discourse written by Erasmus on this argument, not disagreeing in effect from Bucer. But this, I hope, will be enough to excuse me, with the mere Englishman, to be no forger of new and loose opinions. Others may read him in his own phrase on the First to the Corinthians, and ease me, who never could delight in long citations, much less in whole traductions; whether it be natural disposition or education in me, or that my mother bore me a speaker of what God made mine own, and not a translator.'[1]

'"Meet for him." All agree effectual conformity of disposition and affection to be here signified; which God, as it were, not satisfied with the naming

[1] 'The Judgment of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce,' *Works*, vol. iii. p. 280.

of a help, goes on describing another self, a second self, a very self itself. Yet now there is nothing in the life of man, through our misconstruction, made more uncertain, more hazardous and full of chance, than this divine blessing, with such favourable significance here conferred upon us; which, if we do but err in our choice, the most unblamable error that can be, err but one minute, one moment after those mighty syllables pronounced, which take upon them to join heaven and hell together, unpardonably till death pardon; this divine blessing that looked but now with such a human smile upon us, and spoke such gentle reason, straight vanishes like a fair sky, and brings on such a scene of cloud and tempest, as turns all to shipwreck without haven or shore, but to a ransomless captivity.

"'"Cleave to a wife"—but let her be a wife, let her be a meet help, a solace; not a nothing, not an adversary, not a desertrice.[1] Can any law or command be so unreasonable as to make men cleave to calamity, to ruin, to perdition? In like manner here, "They shall be one flesh"; but what

[1] Such was his own wife at this present time.

is it must make them one flesh, but likeness, but fitness of mind and disposition, which may breed the spirit of concord and union between them? If that be not in the nature of either, and that there has been a remediless mistake, as vain we go about to compel them into one flesh as if we undertook to weave a garment of dry sand.

'That I, therefore, among others (for who sings not Hylas?), may give as well as take matter to be judged on, it will be looked I should produce another definition than these which have not stood the trial; for if we can attain in this our controversy to define exactly what marriage is, we shall soon learn when there is a nullity thereof, and when a divorce. Definition consists only of causes constituting the essence of a thing. Thus, then, I suppose that marriage by the natural and plain order of God's institution in the text (GEN. ii. 18, 23, 24) may be more demonstratively and essentially defined: "A divine institution, joining man and woman in a love fitly disposed to the helps and comforts of domestic life."

'But God (I solemnly attest him!) withheld from my knowledge the consenting judgment of these

men so late,'—the numerous authorities he had just adduced,—'until they could not be my instructors, but only my unexpected witnesses to partial men, that in this work I had not given the worst experiment of an industry joined with integrity, and the free utterance, though of an unpopular truth.'[1]

'After many rumours of confutations and convictions, forthcoming against the "Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce," it was my hap at length, lighting on a certain parcel of queries, that seek and find not, to find not seeking, a jolly slander, called "Divorce at Pleasure." I stood awhile and wondered, what we might do to a man's heart, or what anatomy use, to find in it sincerity. Whenas one above others, who hath suffered much and long in the defence of truth, shall after all this give her cause to leave him so destitute and so vacant of her defence, as to yield his mouth to be the common road of truth and falsehood, and such falsehood as is joined with a rash and heedless calumny of his neighbour. For what book hath he ever met with maintaining either in the title or in the whole

[1] 'Tetrachordon,' *Works*, vol. iii. p. 334.

pursuance, "Divorce at Pleasure"? It is true, that to divorce upon extreme necessity, when through the perverseness, or the apparent unfitness of either, the continuance can be to both no good at all, but an intolerable injury and temptation to the wronged and defrauded; to divorce then, there is a book that writes it lawful. . . . But as I was waiting, when these light-armed refuters would have done pelting at their three lines uttered with a sage delivery of no reason, but an impotent and worse than Bonner-like censure to burn that which provokes them to a fair dispute; at length a book was brought to my hands, entitled, "An Answer to the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce." Gladly I received it, and very attentively composed myself to read; hoping that now some good man had vouchsafed the pains to instruct me better than I could yet learn out of all the volumes which for this purpose I had visited. Only this I marvelled, and other men have since, whenas I, in a subject so new to this age, and so hazardous to please, concealed not my name, why this author, defending that part which is so creeded by the people, would conceal his. But ere I could enter three leaves

into the pamphlet, my satisfaction came in abundantly, that it could be nothing why he durst not name himself, but the guilt of his own wretchedness.' Milton then proceeds to act on the principle of his motto, 'Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.' We shall not, however, follow him, as there is nothing further autobiographical in this treatise except this sentence, 'I had rather, since the life of man is likened to a scene,' (he evidently means by Shakspeare), 'that all my entrances and exits might mix with such persons only whose worth erects them and their actions to a grave and tragic deportment, and not to have to do with clowns and vices.'[1]

'With a lively pleasure do I read your anxious inquiries about my health since I left Florence; which imperious circumstances compelled me to quit against my inclination, but which was and is most dear to me. I appeal to the tomb of Damon' (i.e. of his dear friend Charles Diodati, whom we must carefully distinguish from the Charles Diodati to whom he is here writing), 'which I shall ever cherish and revere; his death occasioned the most

[1] 'Colasterion,' *Works*, vol. iii. p. 434.

bitter sorrow and regret, which I could find no more easy way to mitigate than by recalling the memory of those times when, with those persons,[1] and particularly with you, I tasted bliss without alloy. This you would have known long since, if you received my poem on that occasion.' (The 'Epitaphium Damonis,' 1639). 'I had it carefully sent, that whatever poetical merit it might possess, the few verses which are included in the manner of an emblem might afford no doubtful proof of my love for you' (lines 136–138). 'I thought that by this means I should entice you or some other persons to write; for if I wrote first, it seemed necessary that I should write to all, as, if I wrote to one exclusively, I feared that I should give offence to the rest; since I hope that many are still left who might justly claim the performance of this duty. But you, by first addressing me in a manner so truly friendly, and by a triple repetition of epistolary kindness, have laid me under an obligation to write to you, and have exonerated me from the censure of those to whom I do not write. Though I must confess that I found other reasons for silence in

[1] His friends in Florence.

these convulsions which my country has experienced since my return home, which necessarily diverted my attention from the prosecution of my studies to the preservation of my property and my life. For can you imagine that I could have leisure to taste the sweets of literary ease while so many battles were fought, so much blood shed, and while so much ravage prevailed among my fellow-citizens? But even in the midst of this tempestuous period, I have published several works in my native language, which if they had not been written in English, I should have pleasure in sending to you, whose judgment I so much revere. My Latin poems' (published in 1645) 'I will soon send, as you desire; and this I should have done long ago without being desired, if I had not suspected that some rather harsh expressions which they contained against the Roman Pontiff' ('In Quintum Novembris,' Sylv. ii. 74, 'Interea regum domitor,' &c., i.e. the Pope) 'would have rendered them less pleasing to your ears. Now I request, whenever I mention the rites of your religion in my own way, that you will prevail on your friends (for I am under no apprehension from you) to show me the same indulgence not only which they did to Aligerius and

to Petrarch on a similar occasion, but which you did formerly with such singular benevolence to the freedom of my conversation on topics of religion. Present my kind wishes to Cultellino, Francisco, Trescobaldo, Maltatesto, the younger Clementillo, and every other enquiring friend, and to all the members of the Gaddian Academy.'[1]

'I must crave the indulgence of the reader, if I have said already, or shall say hereafter, more of myself than I wish to say; that, if I cannot prevent the blindness of my eyes, the oblivion or the defamation of my name, I may at least rescue my life from that species of obscurity which is the associate of unprincipled depravity. This it will be necessary for me to do on more accounts than one; first, that so many good and learned men among the neighbouring nations who read my works may not be induced by this fellow's (Salmasius) calumnies to alter the favourable opinion which they have formed of me; but may be persuaded that I am not one who ever disgraced beauty of sentiment by deformity of conduct, or the maxims of a freeman by the actions of a slave; and that the

[1] Letter X. To Charles Diodati, a Florentine noble, 1647.

whole tenour of my life has, by the grace of God, hitherto been unsullied by enormity or crime. Next, that those illustrious worthies, who are the objects of my praise, may know that nothing could afflict me with more shame than to have any vices of mine diminish the force or lessen the value of my panegyric upon them; and, lastly, that the people of England, whom fate, or duty, or their own virtues, have incited me to defend, may be convinced from the purity and integrity of my life, that my defence, if it do not redound to their honour, can never be considered as their disgrace.'[1]

'*Ode to John Rouse, Librarian of Oxford University,*[2] *on a lost volume of my poems, which he requested me to replace, that he might add them to my other works in the public library.*

'O twofold book! single in appearance, but double in reality, neatly and plainly bound, which a youthful bard, no lofty one, in truth, although an

[1] *The Second Defence*, vol. i. p. 252.

[2] This ode, written in Latin, and dated January 23, 1646, in Milton's own handwriting, was inserted between the Latin and English poems in the copy of the edition printed in 1645, which he forwarded to the Bodleian, as stated in the text. It is not elaborately

earnest wooer of the Muse, gave, while he roamed in Italian shades or through British woods, guiltless of all political controversy,[1] striking in turn his native or Italian lyre: my little book, say who stole thee from thy brother-books, thee whom, at the request of my learned friend, I sent from the city to the source of the Thames. Through that request, thou mayest yet hope to escape oblivion. Resume, then, thy station in Apollo's divine home, who prefers the Oxonian vale to Delos or Par-

but neatly bound, in a single volume, with a title-page to each part, as he himself says—

> 'Gemelle cultu simplici gaudens liber,
> Fronde licet genuina,
> Munditieque nitens non operosa.'

He is evidently thinking of Horace's phrase, in his *Ode to Pyrrha*, 'simplex munditiis,' which Milton translates 'plain in thy neatness.' It was a 'double book,' being in two parts, Latin and English. Cowper translated this ode, as well as the rest of Milton's Latin and Italian poems, with the exception of that on the Fifth of November, omitted on account of its 'asperity and unpleasant matter.' He says it cost him more labour than any other piece in the whole collection. The entire ode is eminently autobiographical, showing his extreme carefulness and ambitious aspirations as an author, the consciousness that he was unpopular and unappreciated, that posterity, a *cordatior ætas*, would do him justice, *livore sepulto*—a prophecy which has indeed, though tardily, been fulfilled.

[1] *Insons Populi.* He had written his religious tracts on Episcopacy and Divorce, but his political and polemical tracts date four or five years after this ode.

nassus. There thou shalt be read amongst the ancient luminous authors of Greece and Rome. Ye then, my labours, no longer vain, though late, now expect a happy home, unmolested by envy; where neither the flippant tongue of the vulgar shall penetrate, nor shall the coarse crowd of readers approach near thee: but distant generations, and a wiser age perhaps, shall form their judgments more fairly and more impartially—then, envy being buried, if our deserts are any, a discreet posterity shall appreciate them.'[1]

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PASSAGES FROM MILTON'S POETRY.

As one who long in populous city pent,
Where houses thick and sewers annoy the air,
Forth issuing on a summer's morn to breathe
Among the pleasant villages and farms
Adjoin'd, from each thing met conceives delight,
The smell of grain, or tedded grass, or kine,
Or dairy, each rural sight, each rural sound;
If chance with nymph-like step fair virgin pass,
What pleasing seem'd, for her now pleases more,
She most, and in her look sums all delight.[2]

[1] *Ad* JOANNEM ROUSIUM, *Oxoniensis Academiæ Bibliothecarium.*

[2] *Paradise Lost*, ix. 445–54. The poet, as he penned these lines, doubtless described his own feelings, when, at the age of

I did but prompt the age to quit their clogs
By the known rules of ancient liberty,
When straight a barbarous noise environs me,
Of owls and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs;
That bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free.
License they mean when they cry liberty;[1]
For who loves that must first be wise and good;
But from that mark how far they rove we see,
For all this waste of wealth and loss of blood.[2]

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide:
'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?'
I fondly ask; but Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need
Either man's work, or His own gifts; who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best: His state

thirty-five, he issued from his dismal lodgings in St. Bride's Churchyard to visit his lady-love Mary Powell at Forest Hill. How bright and enchanting, by contrast, would all around him appear, pleased with everything, with her most, who in the sequel proved so unworthy, and in fact drove him from poetry to politics!

[1] 'None can love freedom heartily but good men; the rest love not *freedom* but *license*.'—*Tenure of Kings and Magistrates.*

[2] Sonnet XII. 'On the detraction which followed upon my writing certain Treatises.'

Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.[1]

Cyriac, this three-years-day, these eyes, though clear
To outward view of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot;
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,
Or man, or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heav'n's hand, or will, nor bate one jot
Of heart or hope; but still bear up, and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask?
The conscience,[2] friend, to have lost them overpli'd
In Liberty's defence,[3] my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.
This thought might lead me through this world's vain mask,
Content, though blind, had I no better guide.[4]

[1] Sonnet XIX. 'On his Blindness.' Was this inherited, as Aubrey says that his mother wore spectacles soon after she was thirty?

[2] Consciousness.

[3] He alludes here to his *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano*, before writing which he was warned by his physicians that if he persisted he would lose the sight of his remaining eye, which penalty he willingly incurred.

[4] Sonnet XXII. To Cyriac Skinner, upon his Blindness. He was the friend and perhaps pupil of Milton. His mother was the daughter of Sir Edward Coke, to whom the poet alludes in his twenty-first sonnet.

CHAPTER IV.

LATIN SECRETARY TO CROMWELL.[1]—CONTROVERSY WITH SALMASIUS.

A.D. 1648—1655.—A. ÆT. 40—48.

'THE beginning of nations is to this day unknown. Perhaps disesteem and contempt of the public affairs then present, as not worth recording, might partly be in cause. Certainly ofttimes we see that wise men, and of best ability, have forborne to write the acts of their own days, while they beheld with a just loathing and disdain, not only how

[1] It is not clear how long Milton's secretaryship actually lasted. We know that he wrote State-papers up to the time of the Restoration. But he seems to have retired from active service in 1655, having his salary reduced from 288*l.* to 150*l.* per annum, which was to be paid to him *during his life*, as is seen from an order in Council, dated April 17, 1655. This left him, though entirely blind a year before, time at his disposal for four great works which he contemplated, his *History of England*, *Latin Dictionary*, *A Body of Divinity*, and his long-intended Epic Poem.

unworthy, how perverse, how corrupt, but often how ignoble, how petty, how below all history, the persons and their actions were; who, either by fortune or some rude election, had attained, as a sore judgment and ignominy upon the land, to have chief sway in managing the commonwealth.[1]

'Seeing that ofttimes relations heretofore accounted fabulous have been after found to contain in them many footsteps and reliques of something true, as what we read in poets of the flood, and giants, little believed, till undoubted witnesses taught us that all was not feigned; I have, therefore, determined to bestow the telling over even of these reputed tales; be it for nothing else but in favour of our English poets and rhetoricians, who by their art will know how to use them judiciously. Which, imploring Divine assistance, that it may redound to His glory, and the good of the British nation, I now begin.'[2]

At the commencement of the third book, he digresses to draw a parallel or portrait of the Long

[1] Here we learn to qualify our surprise that Milton, with his love of history, should have never written a history of his own times.

[2] 'History of Britain,' book i., *Works*, vol. v. p. 164.

Parliament and the Assembly of Divines, 'considering that the late civil broils had cast us into a condition not much unlike to what the Britons then were in when the imperial jurisdiction departing hence left them to the sway of their own councils.' It is omitted in all editions up to that of 1738 for political reasons. It is too long and dry to insert here, though some part of it is highly autobiographical, as he seems evidently to have had his own sufferings and treatment in view, and his own petition to the sequestrators with regard to the property of his father-in-law, Richard Powell.

'On civil liberty I said nothing, because I saw that sufficient attention was paid to it by the magistrates; nor did I write anything on the prerogative of the Crown, till the king, voted an enemy by the Parliament, and vanquished in the field, was summoned before the tribunal which condemned him to lose his head. But when, at length, some Presbyterian ministers, who had formerly been the most bitter enemies to Charles, became jealous of the growth of the Independents and of their ascendency in the Parliament, most tumultuously clamoured against the sentence, and

did all in their power to prevent the execution, though they were not angry, so much on account of the act itself, as because it was not the act of their party; and when they dared to affirm that the doctrine of the Protestants, and of all the reformed Churches, was abhorrent to such an atrocious proceeding against kings, I thought that it became me to oppose such a glaring falsehood; and accordingly, without any immediate or personal application to Charles, I showed, in an abstract consideration of the question, what might lawfully be done against tyrants; and in support of what I advanced, produced the opinions of the most celebrated divines; while I vehemently inveighed against the egregious ignorance or effrontery of men who professed better things, and from whom better things might have been expected. That book[1] did not make its appearance till after the death of Charles; and was written rather to reconcile the minds of the people to the event than to discuss the legitimacy of that particular sentence which concerned the magistrates, and which was already executed. Such were the

[1] *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, 1648–49.

fruits of my private studies, which I gratuitously presented to the Church and to the State;[1] and for which I was recompensed by nothing but impunity; though the actions themselves procured me peace of conscience, and the approbation of the good; while I exercised that freedom of discussion which I loved. Others, without labour or desert, got possession of honours and emoluments; but no one ever knew me either soliciting anything myself or through the medium of my friends. I usually kept myself secluded at home, where my own property, part of which had been withheld during the civil commotions, and part of which had been absorbed in the oppressive contributions which I had to sustain, afforded me a scanty subsistence. When I was released from these engagements, and thought that I was about to enjoy an interval of uninterrupted ease, I turned my thoughts to a continued history of my country, from the earliest times to the present period. I had already finished four books, when, after the subversion of the monarchy, and the establishment of a republic, I was surprised by an invitation from the Council

[1] This applies to all he had hitherto written.

of State, who desired my services in the office for Foreign Affairs. A book[1] appeared soon after, which was ascribed to the king, and contained the most invidious charges against the Parliament. I was ordered to answer it; and opposed the Iconoclast to his Icon. I did not insult over fallen majesty, as is pretended; I only preferred Queen Truth to King Charles. The charge of insult, which I saw that the malevolent would urge, I was at some pains to remove in the beginning of the work; and as often as possible in other places. Salmasius then appeared, to whom they were not long, as More says, in looking about for an opponent, but immediately appointed me, who happened at the time to be present in the Council. I have thus given some account of myself, in order to stop your mouth, O More, and to remove any prejudices which your falsehoods and misrepresentations might cause even good men to entertain against me.'[2]

'Which enterprise' (the defence of the people of England in the matter of Charles's trial and

[1] *The Icon Basilikè*, written by Charles I. or Dr. Gauden.

[2] 'The Second Defence,' *Works*, vol. i. p. 259.

execution), 'though some of the most eminent persons in our commonwealth have prevailed upon me by their authority to undertake, and would have it be my business to vindicate with my pen against envy and calumny those glorious performances of theirs (whose opinion of me I take as a very great honour, that they should pitch upon me before others to be serviceable in this kind of those most valiant deliverers of my native country; and true it is, that from my very youth, I have been bent extremely upon such sort of studies as inclined me, if not to do great things myself, at least to celebrate those that did), yet as having no confidence in any such advantages, I have recourse to the Divine assistance; and invoke the great and holy God, the Giver of all good gifts, that I may as substantially and as truly discourse and refute the sauciness and lies of this foreign declaimer, as our noble generals piously and successfully by force of arms broke the king's pride, and his unruly domineering, and afterwards put an end to both by inflicting a memorable punishment upon himself, and as thoroughly as a single person[1] did

[1] Milton himself in his *Iconoclastes*.

with ease but of late confute and confound the king himself, rising as it were from the grave, and recommending himself to the people in a book published after his death, with new artifices and allurements of words and expressions. If it be asked why we did not attack him sooner, for others I am not to answer; for myself I can boldly say that I had neither words nor arguments long to seek for the defence of so good a cause, if I had enjoyed such a measure of health as would have endured the fatigue of writing. And being but weak in body, I am forced to write by piecemeal, and break off almost every hour, though the subject be such as requires an unintermitted study and intenseness of mind.'[1]

'First, the delay' (of not writing) 'was occasioned by ill-health, whose hostilities I have now almost perpetually to combat; next, by a cause of ill-health, a necessary and sudden removal to another house, which had accidentally begun to take place on the day that your letter arrived; and lastly, by shame that I had no intelligence concerning your business, which I thought it would be agreeable to

[1] 'The First Defence,' *Works*, vol. i. p. 4.

communicate, for the state of my health often kept me from the Council.'[1]

'I was in some measure made acquainted, most accomplished Philaras, with your good will towards me, and with your favourable opinion of my "Defence of the People of England." I who am not wont to despise the genius of the German, the Dane, and Swede, could not but set the highest value on your applause, who was born at Athens itself, and who, after having happily finished your studies in Italy, obtained the most splendid distinctions and the highest honours. To the writings of those illustrious men which your city has produced, in the perusal of which I have been occupied from my youth, it is with pleasure I confess that I am indebted for all my proficiency in literature. Did I possess their command of language and their force of persuasion, I should feel the highest satisfaction in employing them to excite our armies and our fleets to deliver Greece, the parent of eloquence, from the despotism of the Ottomans. Such is the enterprise in which you seem to wish to implore my aid.'[2]

[1] Letter XI. To Hermann Milles.

[2] Letter XII. To Leonard Philaras, the Athenian, 1652.

'A grateful recollection of the Divine goodness is the first of human obligations; and extraordinary favours demand more solemn and devout acknowledgments: with such acknowledgments I feel it my duty to begin this work.[1] First, because I was born at a time when the virtue of my fellow-citizens, far exceeding that of their progenitors in greatness of soul and vigour of enterprise, having invoked Heaven to witness the justice of their cause, and been clearly governed by its directions, has succeeded in delivering the commonwealth from the most grievous tyranny, and religion from the most ignominious degradation. And next, because when there suddenly rose many who, as is usual with the vulgar, basely calumniated the most illustrious achievements; and when one eminent above the rest (Salmasius), inflated with literary pride and the zealous applauses of his partisans, had in a scandalous publication, which was particularly levelled against me, nefariously undertaken to plead the cause of despotism, I, who was neither deemed unequal to so renowned an adversary, nor to so great a subject, was particularly selected by the deliverers of our country, and by the general

[1] The Second Defence.

suffrage of the public, openly to vindicate the rights of the English nation, and consequently of liberty itself. Lastly, because in a matter of so much moment, and which excited such ardent expectations, I did not disappoint the hopes nor the opinions of my fellow-citizens; while men of learning and eminence abroad honoured me with unmingled approbation; while I obtained such a victory over my opponent, that notwithstanding his unparalleled assurance, he was obliged to quit the field with his courage broken and his reputation lost; and for the three years which he lived afterwards, much as he menaced and furiously as he raved, he gave me no further trouble, except that he procured the paltry aid of some despicable hirelings, and suborned some of his silly and extravagant admirers, to support him under the weight of the unexpected and recent disgrace which he had experienced. This will immediately appear. Such are the signal favours which I ascribe to the Divine beneficence, and which I thought it right devoutly to commemorate, not only that I might discharge a debt of gratitude, but particularly because they seem auspicious to the success of my present un-

dertaking. For who is there who does not identify the honour of his country with his own? . . . I can easily repel any charge which may be adduced against me, either of want of courage or want of zeal. For though I did not participate in the toils or dangers of the war, yet I was at the same time engaged in a service not less hazardous to myself and more beneficial to my fellow-citizens; nor, in the adverse turns of our affairs, did I ever betray any symptoms of pusillanimity and dejection; or show myself more afraid than became me of malice or of death. For since from my youth I was devoted to the pursuits of literature, and my mind had been always stronger than my body, I did not court the labours of a camp, in which any common person would have been of more service than myself, but resorted to that employment in which my exertions were likely to be of most avail. Thus, with the better part of my frame, I contributed as much as possible to the good of my country, and to the success of the glorious cause in which we were engaged; and I thought that if God willed the success of such glorious achievements, it was equally agreeable to His will that there should be

others by whom those achievements should be recorded with dignity and elegance; and that the truth, which had been defended by arms, should also be defended by reason; which is the best and only legitimate means of defending it. Hence, while I applaud those who were victorious in the field, I will not complain of the province which was assigned me; but rather congratulate myself upon it, and thank the Author of all good for having placed me in a station which may be an object of envy to others rather than of regret to myself. I am far from wishing to make any vain or arrogant comparisons, or to speak ostentatiously of myself; but, in a cause so great and glorious, and particularly on an occasion when I am called by the general suffrage to defend the very defenders of that cause, I can hardly refrain from assuming a more lofty and swelling tone than the simplicity of an exordium may seem to justify;[1] and much as I may be surpassed in the powers of eloquence and copiousness of diction, by the illus-

[1] This thought is repeated from the opening of the *Areopagitica*: 'The thought of whom this address hath recourse to, hath got the power within me to a passion, far more welcome than incidental to a Preface.'

trious orators of antiquity, yet the subject of which I treat was never surpassed in any age, in dignity, or in interest. It has excited such general and such ardent expectation, that I imagine myself, not in the forum or on the rostrum, surrounded only by the people of Athens or of Rome, but about to address in this, as I did in my former Defence, the whole collective body of people, cities, states, and councils of the wise and eminent, through the wide expanse of anxious and listening Europe. I seem to survey, as from a towering height, the far extended tracts of sea and land, and innumerable crowds of spectators, betraying in their looks the liveliest interest, and sensations the most congenial with my own. Here I behold the stout and manly prowess of the Germans disdaining servitude; there the generous and lively impetuosity of the French; on this side, the calm and stately valour of the Spaniard—on that, the composed and wary magnanimity of the Italian. Of all the lovers of liberty and virtue, the magnanimous and the wise, in whatever quarter they may be found, some secretly favour, others openly approve; some greet me with congratulations and

applause—others, who had long been proof against conviction, at last yield themselves captive to the force of truth. Surrounded by congregated multitudes, I now imagine that, from the columns of Hercules to the Indian Ocean, I behold the nations of the earth recovering that liberty which they so long had lost; and that the people of this island are transporting to other countries a plant of more beneficial qualities, and more noble growth, than that which Triptolemus is reported to have carried from region to region—that they are disseminating the blessings of civilization and freedom among cities, kingdoms, and nations. Nor shall I approach unknown, nor perhaps unloved, if it be told that I am the same person who engaged in single combat that fierce advocate of despotism; over whom, if I may trust to the opinions of impartial judges, I gained a complete and glorious victory. That this is the plain unvarnished fact appears from this: that, after the most noble Queen of Sweden had invited Salmasius or Salmasia (for to which sex he belonged is a matter of uncertainty) to her court, where he was received with great distinction, my Defence suddenly surprised him in

the midst of his security. It was generally read, and by the Queen among the rest, who, attentive to the dignity of her station, let the stranger experience no diminution of her former kindness and munificence. . . . All this I have mentioned that I might clearly show what momentous reasons I had for commencing this work with an effusion of gratitude to the Father of the universe. Such a preface was most appropriate, in which I might prove that I had not been without my share of human misery; but that I had, at the same time, experienced singular marks of the Divine regard; that the supreme wisdom and beneficence had invigorated and enlarged my faculties, to defend the dearest interests, not merely of one people, but of the whole human race, against the enemies of human liberty; and I again invoke the same Almighty Being that I may still be able, with the same integrity, the same diligence, and the same success, to defend those actions which have been so gloriously achieved. . . . But the conflict between me and Salmasius is now finally terminated by his death; and I will not write against the dead; nor will I reproach him with the loss of

life as he did me with the loss of sight; though there are some, who impute his death to the penetrating severity of my strictures.

'If I inveigh against tyrants, what is this to kings? whom I am far from associating with tyrants. As much as an honest man differs from a rogue, so much I contend that a king differs from a tyrant. Whence it is clear, that a tyrant is so far from being a king, that he is always in direct opposition to a king. He, therefore, who would authorise the destruction of tyrants, does not authorise the destruction of kings, but of the most inveterate enemies to kings.

'Let us now come to the charges which were brought against myself. What no one, not totally divested of all generous sensibility, would have done, he reproaches me with want of beauty and loss of sight.

A monster huge and hideous, void of sight.'

'You, i.e. More, upbraid me with Cyclopean blindness; and what is more insolent you do it a second time while you deny that you have done it at all. Those eyes which were then no eyes are now

[1] The Second Defence, vol. i. p. 216, &c.

goggle and like those of a witch. Now I am Narcissus, because I did not wish to be drawn a Cyclops by you—because you have seen a portrait of me a very bad likeness "prefixed to my poems." But if I, at the instigation and importunity of the bookseller, permitted myself to be engraved in an unworkmanlike manner by an unskilful engraver, because at that period of the war there was no other in the city, that argued rather that I was careless in that matter the too great attention to which you object to me.'[1]

[1] *Authoris pro se Defensio*, Birch's edition, vol. ii. p. 422. The portrait here alluded to is that prefixed to the edition of his poems published in 1645 by Mosely, Milton's bookseller. It is an oval, with the Muses—Melpomene, Erato, Urania, and Clio—at the angles of the page, and a landscape with shepherds. in evident allusion to his 'Lycidas' and 'L'Allegro.' At the bottom the following inscription is appended in Greek:—

In Effigiei Ejus Sculptorem.

'Αμαθεῖ γεγράφθαι χειρὶ τήνδε μὲν εἰκόνα
Φαίης τάχ' ἄν, πρὸς εἶδος αὐτοφυὲς βλέπων.
Τόνδ' ἐκτυπωτὸν οὐκ ἐπιγνόντες φίλοι
Γελᾶτε φαύλου δυσμίμημα ζωγράφου.

On the Engraver of his Portrait.

You, who look at the original form, perhaps may say that this likeness has been engraved by an unskilful hand. You who do not know the original, laugh at the bad workmanship of a vile painter from life.

'I certainly never supposed that I should have been obliged to enter into a competition for beauty with the Cyclops; but he immediately corrects himself, and says, 'though not indeed huge, for there cannot be a more spare, shrivelled, and bloodless form.' It is of no moment to say anything of personal appearance, yet lest (as the Spanish vulgar, implicitly confiding in the relations of their priests, believe of heretics) any one, from the representations of my enemies, should be led to imagine that I have either the head of a dog, or the horn of a rhinoceros, I will say something on the subject, that I may have an opportunity of paying my grateful acknowledgments to the Deity, and of refuting the most shameless lies. I do not believe that I was ever once noted for deformity by anyone who ever saw me; but the praise of beauty I am not anxious to obtain. My stature, certainly, is not tall; but it rather approaches the middle than the diminutive. Yet what if it were diminutive, when so many men, illustrious both in peace and war, have been the same? And how can that be called diminutive, which is great enough for every virtuous achievement? Nor,

though very thin, was I ever deficient in courage or in strength; and I was wont constantly to exercise myself in the use of the broadsword, as long as it comported with my habit and my years. Armed with this weapon, as I usually was, I should have thought myself quite a match for any one, though much stronger than myself; and I felt perfectly secure against the assault of any open enemy. At this moment I have the same courage, the same strength, though not the same eyes; yet so little do they betray any external appearance of injury, that they are as unclouded and bright as the eyes of those who most distinctly see. In this instance alone I am a dissembler against my will. My face, which is said to indicate a total privation of blood, is of a complexion entirely opposite to the pale and the cadaverous; so that, though I am more than forty (forty-seven) years old, there is scarcely anyone to whom I do not appear ten years younger than I am; and the smoothness of my skin is not, in the least, affected by the wrinkles of age. If there be one particle of falsehood in this relation, I should deservedly incur the ridicule of many

thousands of my countrymen, and even many foreigners to whom I am personally known. Thus much necessity compelled me to assert concerning my personal appearance. I wish that I could with equal facility refute what this barbarous opponent has said of my blindness; but I cannot do it; and I must submit to the affliction. It is not so wretched to be blind, as it is not to be capable of enduring blindness. But why should I not endure a misfortune, which it behoves every one to be prepared to endure if it should happen—which may in the common course of things happen to any man, and which has been known to happen to the most distinguished and virtuous persons in history. Shall I mention those wise and ancients bards, whose misfortunes the gods are said to have compensated by superior endowments, and whom men so much revered, that they chose rather to impute their want of sight to the injustice of heaven than to their own want of innocence or virtue? But God Himself is truth; in propagating which, as men display a greater integrity and zeal, they approach nearer to the similitude of God, and possess a greater

portion of His love. We cannot suppose the Deity envious of truth, or unwilling that it should be freely communicated to mankind. The loss of sight, therefore, which this inspired sage (Tiresias), who was so eager in promoting knowledge among men, sustained, cannot be considered as a judicial punishment. Or shall I mention those worthies who were as distinguished for wisdom in the cabinet, as for valour in the field? And first, Timoleon of Corinth, who delivered his city and all Sicily from the yoke of slavery; next Appius Claudius; then Cæcilius Metellus the high-priest. On other occasions Providence has indeed given conspicuous proofs of its regard for such singular exertions of patriotism and virtue; what, therefore, happened to so great and so good a man, I can hardly place in the catalogue of misfortunes. Why should I mention others of later times, as Dandalo of Venice, the incomparable Doge; or Boemar Zisca; or Jerome Zachius? For it is evident that the patriarch Isaac, than whom no man ever enjoyed more of the Divine regard, lived blind for many years; and perhaps also his son Jacob, who was equally an object of the Divine

benevolence. And in short, did not our Saviour Himself clearly declare that that poor man whom he restored to sight had not been born blind either on account of his own sins or those of his progenitors? And with respect to myself, though I have accurately examined my conduct and scrutinized my soul, I call Thee, O God, the Searcher of hearts, to witness, that I am not conscious, either in the more early or in the later periods of my life, of having committed any enormity which might deservedly have marked me out as a fit object for such a calamitous visitation. But since my enemies boast that this affliction is only a retribution for the transgressions of my pen, I again invoke the Almighty to witness, that I never at any time wrote anything which I did not think agreeable to truth, to justice, and to piety. This was my persuasion then, and I feel the same persuasion now. Nor was I ever prompted to such exertions by the influence of ambition, by the lust of lucre or of praise; it was only by the conviction of duty and the feeling of patriotism, a disinterested passion for the extension of civil and religious liberty. Thus, therefore, when I was pub-

licly solicited to write a reply to the Defence of the Royal Cause, when I had to contend with the pressure of sickness, and with the apprehension of soon losing the sight of my remaining eye, and when my medical attendants clearly announced, that if I did engage in the work, it would be irreparably lost, their premonitions caused no hesitation and inspired no dismay. I would not have listened to the voice even of Esculapius himself from the shrine of Epidaurus, in preference to the suggestions of the heavenly monitor within my breast; my resolution was unshaken, though the alternative was either the loss of my sight or the desertion of my duty: and I called to mind those two destinies which the oracle of Delphi announced to the son of Thetis (Achilles):—

> Two fates may lead me to the realms of night;
> If staying here, around Troy's wall I fight,
> To my dear home no more must I return;
> But lasting glory will adorn my urn.
> But, if I withdraw from the martial strife,
> Short is my fame, but long will be my life.[1]

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[1] *Iliad*, ix. 411–416.

I considered that many had purchased a less good by a greater evil, the meed of glory by the loss of life; but that I might procure great good by little suffering; that though I am blind, I might still discharge the most honourable duties, the performance of which, as it is something more durable than glory, ought to be an object of superior admiration and esteem; I resolved, therefore, to make the short interval of sight, which was left me to enjoy, as beneficial as possible to the public interest. Let then the calumniators of the Divine goodness consider, that my situation, such as it is, is neither an object of my shame or my regret, that my resolutions are too firm to be shaken, that I am not depressed by any sense of the Divine displeasure; that, on the other hand, in the most momentous periods, I have had full experience of the Divine favour and protection; and that, in the solace and the strength which have been infused into me from above, I have been enabled to do the will of God; that I may oftener think on what He has bestowed, than on what He has withheld; that, in short, I am unwilling to exchange my consciousness of rectitude with that of any other

person; and that I feel the recollection a treasured store of tranquillity and delight. But, if the choice were necessary, I would prefer my blindness to yours; yours is a cloud spread over the mind, which darkens both the light of reason and of conscience; mine keeps from my view only the coloured surfaces of things, while it leaves me at liberty to contemplate the beauty and stability of virtue and of truth. How many things are there besides which I would not willingly see; how many which I must see against my will; and how few which I feel any anxiety to see! There is, after the example of the Apostle, a way to strength through weakness. Let me, then, be the most feeble creature alive, as long as that feebleness serves to invigorate the energies of my rational and immortal spirit; as long as in that obscurity in which I am enveloped, the light of the Divine presence more clearly shines; then, in proportion as I am weak, I shall be invincibly strong; and in proportion as I am blind, I shall more clearly see. O! that I may thus be perfected by feebleness, and irradiated by obscurity. And indeed, in my blindness, I enjoy in no incon-

siderable degree of favour of the Deity, who regards me with more tenderness and compassion in proportion as I am able to behold nothing but Himself. Alas! for him who insults me, who maligns and merits public execration! For the Divine law not only shields me from injury, but almost renders me too sacred to attack—not indeed so much from the privation of my sight, as from the overshadowing of those heavenly wings which seem to have occasioned this obscurity; and which, when occasioned, He is wont to illuminate with an interior light, more precious and more pure. To this I ascribe the more tender assiduities of my friends, their soothing attentions, their kind visits, their reverential observances. This extraordinary kindness cannot be any fortuitous combination; and friends, such as mine, do not suppose that all the virtues of a man are contained in his eyes. Nor do the persons of principal distinction in the commonwealth suffer me to be bereaved of comfort, when they see me bereaved of sight, amid the exertions which I made, the zeal which I shewed, and the dangers which I run for the liberty which I love. But,

soberly reflecting on the casualties of human life, they shew me favour and indulgence, as to a soldier who has served his time, and kindly concede to me an exemption from care and toil. They do not strip me of the badges of honour which I have once worn; they do not deprive me of the places of public trust to which I have been appointed; they do not abridge my salary or emoluments; which, though I may not do so much to deserve as I did formerly, they are too considerate and too kind to take away; and, in short, they honour me as much as the Athenians did those whom they determined to support at the public expense in the Prytaneum. Thus, while both God and man unite in solacing me under the weight of my affliction, let no one lament my loss of sight in so honourable a cause. And let me not indulge in unavailing grief, or want the courage either to despise the revilers of my blindness, or the forbearance easily to pardon the offence.'[1]

(Here follows the interesting episode of his own career from his birth to the present time, and of

[1] 'The Second Defence,' *Works*, vol. i. p. 235.

the history of the several works which he had written, which has already been given in its proper chronological place.)

'Your thanks for my Defence are more than it deserves. I had more than once an intention of substituting our English for your Latin. With respect to the subject of your letter you are clearly of my opinion, that that cry to Heaven could not have been audible by any human being, which only serves the more palpably to shew the effrontery of him who affirms with so much audacity that he heard it. Who he was you have caused a doubt; though long since, you seemed to have no doubt but that More was the author[1] to whom the composition was unanimously ascribed. If you have received any more authentic information on this subject, I wish you would acquaint me with it. With respect to the mode of handling the argument I wish that I could agree with you. If my health and the deprivation of my sight will permit, I shall readily be led to engage in other undertakings, though I know not whether they can

[1] It was really Peter Du Moulin who wrote the *Regii Sanguinis Clamor.*

be more noble or more useful; for what can be more noble or more useful than to vindicate the liberty of man! An inactive indolence never pleased me; and this unexpected contest with the enemies of liberty has involuntarily withdrawn my attention from very different and more pleasurable pursuits. What I have done, and which I was under an obligation to do, I feel no reason to regret, and I am far from thinking, as you seem to suppose, that I have laboured in vain.'[1]

'I have always been devotedly attached to the literature of Greece, and particularly to that of your Athens. When you unexpectedly came to London, and saw me who could no longer see, my affliction excited your tenderest sympathy and concern. You would not suffer me to abandon the hope of recovering my sight; and informed me that you had an intimate friend at Paris, Dr Thevenot, who was particularly celebrated in disorders of the eyes, whom you would consult about mine, if I would enable you to lay before him the causes and symptoms of the complaint. I will do

[1] Letter XIV. To Henry Oldenburgh, 1654.

what you desire, lest I should seem to reject that aid which perhaps may be offered me by Heaven. It is now about ten years since I perceived my vision to grow weak and dull; and at the same time I was troubled with pain in my kidneys and bowels. In the morning, if I began to read, as was my custom, my eyes instantly ached intensely, but were refreshed after a little bodily exercise. The candle which I looked at, seemed as it were encircled with a rainbow. Not long after the sight in the left part of the left eye (which I lost some years before the other,) became quite obscured; and prevented me from discerning any object on that side. If I shut my right eye, objects before me appeared smaller. The sight in my other eye has now been gradually and sensibly vanishing away for about three years; some months before it had entirely perished, though I stood motionless, everything which I looked at seemed in motion to and fro. A stiff cloudy vapour seemed to have settled on my forehead and temples, which usually occasions a sort of somnolent pressure upon my eyes, particularly from dinner till the evening. So that I often re-

collect what is said of the poet Phineus in the Argonautics:—

> A stupor deep his cloudy temples bound,
> And when he walk'd he seem'd as whirling round,
> Or in a feeble trance he speechless lay.

I ought not to omit that while I had any sight left, as soon as I lay down on my bed and turned on either side, a flood of light used to gush from my closed eyelids. Then, as my sight became daily more impaired, the colours became more faint, and were emitted with a certain inward crackling sound; but at present, every species of illumination being as it were extinguished, there is diffused around me nothing but darkness, or darkness mingled and streaked with an ashy brown. Yet the darkness in which I am perpetually immersed, seems always, both by night and day, to approach nearer to white than black; and when the eye is rolling in its socket, it admits a little particle of light, as through a chink. And though your physician may kindle a small ray of hope, yet I make up my mind to the malady as quite incurable; and I often reflect, that, as the

wise man admonishes, days of darkness are destined to each of us, the darkness which I experience, less oppressive than that of the tomb, owing to the singular goodness of the Deity, is passed amid the pursuits of literature, and the cheering salutations of friendship. But if, as is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God," why may not any one acquiesce in this truth, that a man is enlightened not by his eyes alone but by the leadings and providence of God? While He so tenderly provides for me, while He so graciously leads me by the hand through all my life, I will, since it is His pleasure, rather rejoice than repine at being blind. And whatever may be the event, I bid you farewell, with no less courage and composure, than if I was a Lynx.'[1]

'With respect to the Book concerning Divorce, which you say you had engaged some one to turn into Dutch, I would rather you had engaged him to turn it into Latin. For I have already experienced how the vulgar are wont to receive opinions which are not agreeable to vulgar prejudice. I formerly

[1] Letter XV. To Leonard Philaras, the Athenian, 1654.

wrote three Treatises on this subject: one in two books in which the Doctrine of Divorce is diffusely discussed; another entitled Tetrachordon, in which the four principal passages in Scripture relative to the doctrine are explained; a third, Colasterion, which contains an answer to some vulgar sciolist. I know not which of these works, or which edition you have engaged him to translate. The first Treatise has been twice published, and the second edition is much enlarged. If you have not already received this information, or wish me to send you the more correct edition, or the other Treatises, I shall do it immediately and with pleasure. For I do not wish at present they should receive any alterations or additions. If you persist in your present purpose, I wish for myself a faithful translator and for you every sucess.'[1]

'It would be highly grateful to me if you would lend me your assistance against our common enemy. That you have kindly done in your present letter, of which I have taken the liberty, without mentioning the author's name, to insert

[1] Letter XVI. To Leo, of Aizema, 1654.

a part in my Defence. This work I will send you as soon as possible after the publication.' [1]

'Come, bring your charge; speak out clearly and boldly, if you have any thing to say; mention time, place, and names, as I do in your case, (More). Say with what Claudia Pelletta, with what Pontia, in what garden, in what house, whether by night or by day—say if I ever were called to account, ever refused to appear. You will find truly that I have applied this liberty of speaking both to my injuries and the prosecution of your crimes, as the surest testimony and fruit of my past and most stedfast purpose of my future life. You will never hear me repent of this liberty—I feel perfectly secure whatever your talebearers may mutter and prate about me. You will perceive that I have within me that consciousness of the integrity of my life, that esteem of good men, that confidence in the past, that fair hope in the future, which will cause me to investigate your crimes with still greater freedom and diligence. Meanwhile, let us see how you treat as crimes things which are not criminal. In the first place, you ask why I re-

[1] Letter XVII. To Ezekiel Spanheim, 1654.

sponded to the author of the Cry? I answer, because I was publicly ordered by those whose authority ought to have weight with me; else, I had hardly laid a hand upon you. Next, because I was expressly injured; though I did not feel myself injured. Yet why not answer others? I again reply as before, because I go not uncalled to public business. Would you have more reasons? Because I was free to do it or not, because I had not leisure, because in short I am a man, my sides are human, not of iron, though you may be an Alexander of brass. Another of my crimes is that I digressed in order to praise the most serene Queen of Sweden. I really know not by what chance it happened. I chose rather to seem to refer it to chance, to the stars, to the consent or guidance of spirits, (if there be such invisible agency,) than to any supposed manifestations of my genius, my acuteness, or fertility. I come now to my third crime; namely, that I said I went abroad with one servant. . . . The fourth is that, in a book full of the gaieties of loose wassailers, I dared to censure and gravely make speeches about the commonwealth and duty of citizens. It was the

opinion of Plato and the Socratic philosophers that nothing was more appropriate or becoming than that wit and humour should be intermixed and interspersed sometimes even with the gravest subjects. Again, "I prescribe rules," (and this is my fifth crime), "not only for the people, but for those who have no need of me for a preceptor." . . . These are my five deadly sins, for to make seven of them I think was not in your power. . . . But perhaps you will have it to be criminal, that I invoked God as a witness, for you speak of my too anxious protestation. You shall hear what it was, nor shall it now be a mere recitation, but, as I feel no shame for what I have done, and as you here calumniate even my travelling, I again invoke God as a witness in the very words I first used, that in all those places where so much licence is given, I lived free and untouched of all defilement and profligate behaviour; having it ever in my thought, that if I could escape the eyes of men, I certainly could not escape the eyes of God. If you, More, have any honesty in you, dare only to defend yourself in those same words in which I have now set you an example. Repeat these words—I invoke God

as a witness that I have always lived free and pure from all those crimes with which I am charged, that I have never wronged Claudia nor Pontia, nor any other woman whatsoever.' You will not dare, I think, to follow me in these words.' [1]

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PASSAGES FROM MILTON'S POETRY.

Methought I saw my late espoused saint,
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescu'd from death by force, though pale and faint,
Mine, as whom wash'd from spot of child-bed taint,
Purification in the old Law did save,

[1] *Authoris pro se Defensio.* Birch, vol. ii. p. 427. I confess that I am thoroughly ashamed of Milton lending himself to write this coarse and tedious tirade against Alexander More. Had anyone else than our great poet written it, I would not have raked up any portion of it from that deserved oblivion in which it has so long lain. Bohn, in his five-volume edition of Milton's Prose Works, omits it altogether. Still it seemed undesirable, and almost impossible, to leave out the above-quoted passages in constructing and compiling this Biography in his own words and from his own works. The solemn protestation, almost in the very same words, occurs in the *Second Defence*, and is quoted at page 59 of this work. Alas for human inconsistency! Alas, for the littleness of all human greatness! *Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit.* "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

And such, as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heav'n without restraint,
Came, vested all in white, pure as her mind:
Her face was veil'd, yet to my fancied sight
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shin'd
So clear, as in no face with more delight.
But O, as to embrace me she inclin'd,
I wak'd, she fled, and day brought back my night.[1]

Hail, holy Light! offspring of Heav'n first-born,
Or of th' Eternal co-eternal beam
May I express thee unblam'd? since God is Light,
And never but in unapproached light
Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee,
Bright effluence of bright essence increate.
Or hear'st thou rather pure ethereal stream,
Whose fountain who shall tell? Before the sun,
Before the Heavens thou wert, and at the voice
Of God, as with a mantle didst invest
The rising world of waters dark and deep,
Won from the void and formless infinite.
Thee I revisit now with bolder wing,
Escap'd the Stygian pool, though long detain'd

[1] Sonnet XXIII. On his deceased wife. This was Catharine Woodcock, his second wife, whom he lost within a year after their marriage. With her he was happy, and for this brief space experienced

'that blissful life,
That is betwixt a husband and his wife.'

In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight,
Through utter and through middle darkness borne,
With other notes than to th' Orphean lyre
I sung of Chaos and eternal Night,
Taught by the heav'nly muse to venture down
The dark descent, and up to re-ascend,
Though hard and rare: thee I revisit safe,
And feel thy sovereign vital lamp; but thou
Revisit'st not these eyes, and find no dawn;
So thick a drop serene has quench'd their orbs,
Or dim suffusion veil'd. Yet not the more
Cease I to wander where the muses haunt
Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill,
Smit with the love of sacred song: but chief
Thee, Sion, and the flowry brooks beneath
That wash'd thy hallow'd feet, and warbling flow,
Nightly I visit: nor sometimes forget
Those other two equall'd with me in fate,
So were I equall'd with them in renown,
Blind Thamyris, and blind Mæonides,
And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old.
Then feed on thoughts that voluntary move
Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful bird
Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid
Tunes her nocturnal note. Thus with the year
Seasons return; but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;

But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off; and for the book of knowledge fair
Presented with a universal blank
Of Nature's works to me expung'd and ras'd,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.
So much the rather thou celestial Light
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from hence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight.[1]

Godlike erect, with native honour clad,
For contemplation he and valour form'd,
For God only.
His fair large front and eye sublime declar'd
Absolute rule; and hyacinthine locks
Round from his parted forelock manly hung
Clustring, but not beneath his shoulders broad:
Adam the goodliest man of men since born
His sons.[2]

Standing on earth, not rapt above the pole,
More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged

[1] *Paradise Lost*, iii. 1–55.

[2] *Ibid.* iv. 289. Milton was eminently handsome, and wore his hair parted on the top, long and waving, not at all after the Puritan fashion. According to the account of his personal appearance which has come down to us, he must have resembled his own ideal Adam.

To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil days,
On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues;
In darkness, and with dangers compass'd round,
And solitude; yet not alone, while thou
Visit'st my slumbers nightly, or when morn
Purples the east: still govern thou my song,
Urania, and fit audience find, though few.[1]

Thus I have told thee all my state, and brought
My story to the sum of earthly bliss
Which I enjoy; here passion first I felt;
here only weak
Against the charm of Beauty's powerful glance.
Love refines
The thoughts, and heart enlarges, hath his seat
In reason, and is judicious, is the scale
By which to Heav'nly love thou may'st ascend.
Adam was not deceived
But fondly overcome with female charm.[2]

[1] *Paradise Lost*, vii. 23–31. Though no longer needing to hide in concealment since the passing of the Act of Indemnity in 1660, Milton was far from considering his position secure.

[2] *Ibid.* viii. 521, 530, 589, and ix. 998. Never was there a more ardent lover — never was anyone more deeply imbued with 'the spirit of love and amorous delight'—than was our great poet. Married three times — in love we cannot say how many times—in London, at Cambridge, in Italy—with Leonora, with Miss Davies, with an unknown face on a Mayday—he speaks here and elsewhere not as a novice but as a master in the divine art, and from the depths of his own bitter and sweet experience.

The theme he chose for his great Epic is 'not less but more heroic' than the Iliad, Odyssey, or the Æneid.

If answerable style I can obtain
Of my celestial patroness, who deigns
Her nightly visitation unimplor'd,
And dictates to me slumb'ring, or inspires
Easy my unpremeditated verse:
Since first this subject for heroic song
Pleas'd me long choosing, and beginning late;
Not sedulous by nature to indite
Wars, hitherto the only argument
Heroic deem'd, chief mast'ry to dissect
With long and tedious havoc, fabled knights,
In battles feign'd; the better fortitude
Of patience and heroic martyrdom
Unsung; or to describe races and games,
Or tilting furniture, emblazon'd shields,
Impresses quaint, caparisons and steeds;
Bases and tinsel trappings, gorgeous knights
At joust and tournament; then marshall'd feast
Served up in hall with sewers, and seneschals;
The skill of artifice or office mean,
Not that which justly gives heroic name
To person or to poem. Me of these
Nor skill'd nor studious, higher argument
Remains, sufficient of itself to raise

That name, unless an age too late, or cold
Climate, or years damp my intended wing
Deprest, and much they may, if all be mine,
Not hers who brings it nightly to my ear.[1]

O why did God,
Creator wise, that peopl'd highest Heav'n
With spirits masculine, create at last
This novelty on Earth, this fair defect
Of Nature, and not fill the world at once
With men as angels without feminine,
Or find some other way to generate
Mankind? this mischief had not then befall'n,
And more that shall befal, innumerable
Disturbances on Earth through female snares,
And straight conjunction with this sex: for either
He never shall find out fit mate,[2] but such
As some misfortune brings him, or mistake;[3]
Or whom he wishes most shall seldom gain
Through her perverseness, but shall see her gain'd
By a far worse; or if she love, withheld

[1] *Paradise Lost*, ix. 20–47. This deeply interesting autobiographical passage is in fact repeated from various passages already cited. There are numerous sketches of sacred dramas on Scripture subjects projected by Milton still extant. And the long choosing and late beginning of a subject for his darling epic, may be traced from the very earliest period of his life. See Preface to my *Selections from Milton's Prose Works.*

[2] Of his three wives he only found 'fit mate' in Catharine Woodcock, but lost her within the year.

[3] Such 'mistake' he made in choosing his first wife, Mary Powell.

By parents; or his happiest choice too late
Shall meet,[1] already link'd and wedlock-bound
To a fell adversary, his hate or shame:
Which infinite calamity shall cause
To human life, and household peace confound.[2]

He added not, and from her turn'd. But Eve,
Not so repuls'd, with tears that ceas'd not flowing
And tresses all disorder'd, at his feet
Fell humble, and embracing them, besought
His peace, and thus proceeded in her plaint.
She ended weeping, and her lowly plight,
Immoveable till peace obtain'd from fault
Acknowledg'd and deplor'd, in Adam wrought
Commiseration; soon his heart relented
Towards her, his life so late and sole delight,
Now at his feet submissive in distress,

[1] Miss Davies, upon whom he had fixed his affections when he was contemplating a divorce and writing his treatises on that subject.

[2] *Paradise Lost*, x. 888–908. The whole passage portrays his feelings when deserted by his wife for more than two years. He probably had seen Lysander's complaint in Shakespeare's *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, that 'true lovers have ever been cross'd':—

'Ah me! for aught that ever I could read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth:
But either it was different in blood;
Or else misgraffed in respect of years;
Or else it stood upon the choice of friends;
Or if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it.'

Creature so fair his reconcilement seeking,
His counsel whom she had displeas'd, his aid;
As one disarm'd, his anger all he lost,
And thus with peaceful words uprais'd her soon.

[1] *Paradise Lost*, x. 909–913, 937–946. In depicting this scene, Milton doubtless had his own reconciliation with his first wife in mind. See the scene described in Richardson's *Remarks*, p. 73.

CHAPTER V.

A.D. 1655–1674, A. ÆT. 48–66.

RETIRES FROM ACTIVE SERVICE AS SECRETARY —RESUMES POETICAL STUDIES—DEATH

'YOU have done all I desired respecting the Atlas, of which I wished to know the lowest price. You say it is a hundred and thirty florins, which I think is enough to purchase the mountain of that name. But such is the present rage for typographical luxury, that the furniture of a library hardly costs less than that of a villa.[1] Paintings and engravings are of little use to me. While I roll my blind eyes about the world, I fear lest I should seem to lament the privation of sight at

[1] In his *Considerations touching the likeliest means to remove hirelings out of the Church*, Milton computes 'the charges of a minister's needful library; which, though some shame not to value at 600*l.*, may be competently furnished for 60*l.* If any man for his own curiosity or delight be in books further expensive, that is not to be reckoned as necessary to his ministerial, either breeding or function.'

the exorbitant price for which I should have purchased the book. Do you endeavour to learn in how many volumes the entire work is contained; and of the two editions whether that of Blaen or Janson be the more accurate and complete.'[1]

'It gives me pleasure that you are convinced of the tranquillity which I possess under this afflicting privation of sight, as well as of the civility and kindness with which I receive those who visit me from other countries. And indeed why should I not submit with complacency to this loss of sight, which seems only withdrawn from the body without, to increase the sight of the mind within. Hence books have not incurred my resentment, nor do I intermit the study of books, though they have inflicted so heavy a penalty on me for my attachment; the example of Telephus, king of Mysia, who did not refuse to receive a cure from the same weapon by which he had been wounded, admonished me not to be so morose.'[2]

'I am not willing, as you wish me, to compile a history of our troubles; for they seem rather to

[1] Letter XX. To Peter Heimbach, 1656.
[2] Letter XXI. To Emeric Bigot, 1658.

require oblivion than commemoration; nor have we so much need of a person to compose a history of our troubles as happily to settle them. I fear with you lest our civil dissensions, or rather maniacal agitation, should expose us to the attack of the lately confederated enemies of religion and of liberty; but those enemies could not inflict a deeper wound upon religion than we ourselves have long since done by our follies and our crimes. But whatever disturbances kings and cardinals may meditate and contrive, I trust that God will not suffer the machinations and the violence of our enemies to succeed according to their expectations. As soon as my posthumous adversary shall make his appearance I request you to give me the earliest information.'[1]

'Owing to your protection, Supreme Senate! this liberty of writing, which I have used these eighteen years[2] on all occasions to assert the just rights and freedoms both of Church and State, as to have been trusted with the representment and defence of your actions to all Christendom against

[1] Letter XXIX. To Henry Oldenburgh, 1659.

[2] This brings us back to the date of his first prose work, 1641.

an adversary of no mean repute; to whom should I address what I still publish on the same argument, but to you, whose magnanimous councils first opened and unbound the age from a double bondage under prelatical and legal tyranny? . . . And if I have prosperously, God so favouring me, defended the public cause of this commonwealth to foreigners, I request that ye would not think the reason and ability, wherein ye trusted once (and repent not) your whole reputation to the world, either grown less by more maturity and longer study, or less available in English than in another tongue.'[1]

'It is not strange that report should have induced you to believe that I had perished among the numbers of my countrymen who fell in a year so fatally visited by the ravages of the plague. If that rumour sprung, as it seems, out of solicitude for my safety, I consider it as no unpleasing indication of the esteem in which I am held among you. But by the goodness of God, who provided for me a place of refuge in the country, (Chalfont St. Giles,) I yet enjoy both life

[1] 'Considerations touching removing hirelings out of the Church,' *Works*, vol. iii. p. 2.

and health; which as long as they continue, I shall be happy to employ in any useful undertaking. I will conclude after first begging you, if there be any errors in the diction or the punctuation, to impute it to the boy who wrote this, who is quite ignorant of Latin, and to whom, with no little vexation, I was obliged to dictate not the words, but one by one the letters of which they are composed.'[1]

'I devoted myself to the study of the Christian religion because nothing else can so effectually rescue the lives and minds of men from these two detestable curses, slavery and superstition. I resolved not to repose on the faith or judgment of others in matters relating to God; but on the one hand, having taken the grounds of my faith from Divine revelation alone, and on the other, having neglected nothing which depended on my own industry, I thought fit to scrutinize and ascertain for myself the several points of my religious belief, by the most careful perusal and meditation of the Holy Scriptures themselves. I entered upon an assiduous course of study in my youth, beginning

[1] Letter XXXI. To Peter Heimbach, 1666.

with the books of the Old and New Testament in their original languages. It was a great solace to me to have laid up for myself a treasure which would be a provision for my future life, and would remove from my mind all grounds for hesitation, as often as it behoved me to render an account of the principles of my belief. . . . Since I enrol myself among the number of those who acknowledge the Word of God alone as the rule of faith, and freely advance what appears to me much more clearly deducible from the Holy Scriptures than the commonly received opinion, I see no reason why any one who belongs to the same Protestant or Reformed Church, and professes to acknowledge the same rule of faith as myself, should take offence at my freedom, particularly as I impose my authority on no one, but merely propose what I think more worthy of belief than the creed in general acceptation.'[1]

'Let us, therefore, using this last means, last here spoken of but first to be done, amend our lives with all speed; lest through impenitency we

[1] Posthumous work, *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine*, discovered in the State Paper Office in 1823.

run into that stupidity which we now seek all means so warily to avoid, the worst of superstitions, and the heaviest of all God's judgments—Popery.'[1]

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PASSAGES FROM MILTON'S POETRY.

A little onward lend thy guiding hand
To these dark steps, a little further on;
For yonder bank hath choice of sun or shade:
There I am wont to sit:—
The breath of Heav'n fresh blowing, pure and sweet,
With day-spring born; here leave me to respire.[2]

[1] The last words of his last prose work, *Of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, and Toleration*, published in 1673, a year before his death.

[2] *Samson Agonistes*, 1–11. Richardson says in his *Remarks on Milton*, 1734:—'I have heard many years since, that he used to sit in a grey coarse cloth coat at the door of his house, near Bunhill Fields, in warm sunny weather, to enjoy the fresh air, and so, as well as in his room, received the visits of people of distinguished parts, as well as quality. And very lately I had the good fortune to have another picture of him from an ancient clergyman in Dorsetshire, Dr. Wright; he found him in a small house, he thinks but one room on a floor, in that, up one pair of stairs, which was hung with a rusty green, he found *John Milton*, sitting in an elbow-chair, black cloaths, and neat enough, pale, but not cadaverous, his hands and fingers gouty, and with chalk-stones. Among other discourse he expressed himself to this purpose, that was he free from the pain this gave him, his blindness would be tolerable.' *Samson Agonistes*, his last poem, published in 1671, together with *Paradise Regained*, is throughout painfully autobiographical. In it he gives vent to his long pent-up feelings of sorrow, indignation, and resignation.

But chief of all,
O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!
Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age!
Light, the prime work of God, to me is extinct,
And all her various objects of delight
Annull'd, which might in part my grief have eas'd,
Inferior to the vilest, now become
Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me,
They creep, yet see; I dark in light, expos'd
To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,
Within doors, or without, still as a fool,
In power of others, never in my own;
Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.[1]
O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse
Without all hope of day!
O first created beam, and thou great Word,
'Let there be light,' and light was over all;
Why am I thus bereav'd thy prime decree?
The sun to me is dark,
And silent as the moon,
When she deserts the night
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.
Since light so necessary is to life,

[1] There is evidence that his children were undutiful and unkind to him, and combined with his maid-servant to cheat him in marketings, and sold his books, and even wished his death.

And almost life itself, if it be true
That light is in the soul,
She all in every part; why was the sight
To such a tender ball as th' eye confin'd,
So obvious and so easy to be quench'd?
And not, as feeling, through all parts diffus'd,
That she might look at will through every pore?
Then had I not been thus exil'd from light;
As in the land of darkness, yet in light
To live a life half dead, a living death
And buried; but, O yet more miserable!
Myself my sepulchre, a moving grave.[1]

I was His nursling once and choice delight,
His destin'd from the womb.
Under His special eye
Abstemious I grew up and thriv'd amain;
He led me on to mightiest deeds,
But now hath cast me off as never known

God of our fathers, what is man!
That Thou towards him with hand so various
(Or might I say contrarious?)
Temper'st Thy providence through his short course,
Not evenly, as Thou rul'st
The angelic orders, and inferior creatures mute,
Irrational and brute.
Nor do I name of men the common rout,

[1] *Samson Agonistes*, 66–102. [2] *Ibid.* 633–640.

That wand'ring loose about,
Grow up and perish, as the summer-fly;
Heads without name, no more remember'd;
But such as Thou hast solemnly elected,
With gifts and graces eminently adorn'd
To some great work, Thy glory,
And people's safety, which in part they effect:
Yet towards these thus dignifi'd, Thou oft
Amidst their height of noon,
Changest Thy countenance and Thy hand, with no regard
Of highest favours past
From Thee on them, or them to Thee of service.
Nor only dost degrade them, or remit
To life obscur'd, which were a fair dismission,
But throw'st them lower than Thou didst exalt them high;
Unseemly falls in human eye,
Too grievous for the trespass or omission;
Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword
Of heathen and profane, their carcases
To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captiv'd;
Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times,
And condemnation of the ingrateful multitude.
If these they 'scape, perhaps in poverty
With sickness and disease Thou bow'st them down,
In crude old age;
Though not disordinate, yet causeless suff'ring
The punishment of dissolute days; in fine,
Just or unjust, alike seem miserable,
For oft alike both come to evil end.

So deal not with this once Thy glorious champion,
The image of Thy strength, and mighty minister.
What do I beg? how hast Thou dealt already?
Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn
His labours, for Thou canst, to peaceful end.'[1]

My wife! my traitress! let her not come near me.

Out, out hyæna! these are thy wonted arts,
And arts of every woman false like thee,
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray;
Then as repentant to submit, beseech,
And reconcilement move with feign'd remorse,
Confess, and promise wonders in her change;
Not truly penitent, but chief to try
Her husband, how far urg'd his patience bears,
His virtue or weakness which way to assail:
Then with more cautious and instructed skill
Again transgresses, and again submits;
That wisest and best men, full oft beguil'd,
With goodness principled not to reject
The penitent, but ever to forgive,
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,
Entangl'd with a pois'nous bosom snake,

[1] *Samson Agonistes*, 667–709. The prayer of the last two lines was signally answered both in Milton's own case, and in that of Samson's, as we shall presently see.

If not by quick destruction soon cut off,
As I by thee, to ages an example.[1]

Favour'd of Heav'n ! who finds
One virtuous, rarely found,
That in domestic good combines :
Happy that house ! his way to peace is smooth :
But virtue which breaks through all opposition,
And all temptation can remove,
Most shines, and most is acceptable above.
Therefore God's universal law
Gave to the man despotic power
Over his female in due awe ;
Nor from that right to part an hour,
Smile she or lour :
So shall he least confusion draw
On his whole life, not sway'd
By female usurpation, or dismay'd.[2]

But patience is more oft the exercise
Of saints, the trial of their fortitude,
Making them each his own deliverer,

[1] *Samson Agonistes*, 725, 748–765. Milton chose Samson out of the more than ninety dramatic pieces he had planned because of the resemblance of his own fortunes to Samson's ; and shall we compare Mary Powell to Dalila ? We should not be far wrong. He forgave her, but could not well forget the ill-usage he had received. As he wrote, his own matrimonial disturbances must have often come into his mind.

[2] *Ibid.* 1046–1060.

And victor over all
That tyranny or fortune can inflict.
Either of these (invincible might or invincible patience) is in thy lot,
Samson, with might endu'd
Above the sons of men ! but sight bereav'd
May chance to number thee with those
Whom patience finally must crown.[1]

All is best, though we oft doubt,
What th' unsearchable dispose
Of highest Wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close.
Oft He seems to hide His face,
But unexpectedly returns;
And to His faithful champion hath in place
Bore witness gloriously ; whence Gaza mourns,
And all that band them to resist
His uncontrollable intent ;
His servants He with new acquist
Of true experience from this great event,
With peace and consolation hath dismist,
And calm of mind, all passion spent.[2]

[1] *Samson Agonistes*, 1287–1296. First and foremost in the roll of those wearing the crown of patience must be ranked Milton himself, over fate and fortune more than conqueror.

[2] *Ibid.* 1749–1762. How beautiful are these last words of his last poem, written three years before his death, fitly and forcibly

winding up his laborious and eventful life—words as applicable to the conclusion of his own chequered career, as to that of Samson Agonistes, in whose fortunes he seems to have seen a resemblance to his own. And thus concludes this noble, but in some respects melancholy, autobiography. The prayer expressed in the lines 708 and 709 is now fully answered. His labours have been turned to peaceful end. His best and noblest works are his last. All is best found in the close. Patience has her perfect work, and finally crowns Truth's glorious champion, dismissing him to his reward and rest with peace, and consolation, and calm of mind, all passion spent.

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